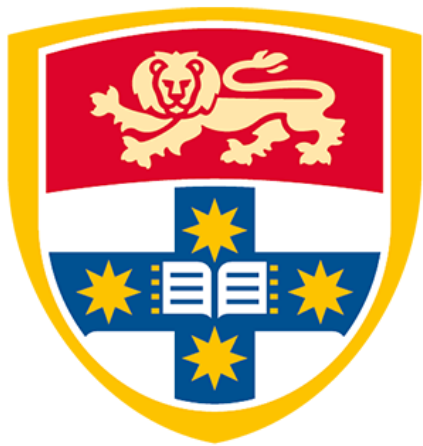
SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Edited by Michele Ford

ROUTLEDGE



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Social Activism in Southeast Asia

Social Activism in Southeast Asia brings together cutting-edge accounts of social movements concerned with civil and political rights, globalization, peace, the environment, migrant and factory labour, the rights of middle- and working-class women, and sexual identity in an overarching framework of analysis that fore-fronts the importance of human rights and the state as a focus for social activism in a region characterized by a history of authoritarian developmentalism and weak civil society. Drawing on contemporary case study material from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste, contributors explore the ways in which social movement actors engage with their international allies, the community and the state in order to promote social change. In doing so, they not only provide detailed and nuanced analyses of particular movements in particular parts of Southeast Asia, but they also address difficult questions concerning the nature of social movements and their politics, strategies and claims to authenticity.

Michele Ford is Director of the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre and Associate Professor in the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney.

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Acknowledgements

The inspiration for this volume came from the frustration I experienced when trying to assemble readings for a course I teach at the University of Sydney called Social Activism in Southeast Asia. Although the scholarship on Southeast Asian social movements is wide-ranging, it proved very difficult to put together a selection of theoretically engaged, up-to-date readings that dealt with a broad range of social movements across the region. Some movements are well-represented in the literature on some countries. Other equally vibrant movements have attracted little or no attention at all. And there was certainly no single volume that brought together analyses of different kinds of social activism in different parts of Southeast Asia in a way that engaged directly with the social movement studies literature. Having decided that there was no easy solution, I set out to put together a volume of cutting-edge research that would make a useful contribution to the literature, but could also be used in my classroom. The result is this collection, which locates expert accounts of Southeast Asia's social movements in an overarching framework of analysis that speaks to the international scholarship on social movements, while at the same time recognizing the unique features of the region.

The editing of this volume could have been a nightmare with eleven substantive chapters by authors in Australia, Canada, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States and very tight timelines. It has been quite the opposite. My heartfelt thanks go to the contributors for their engagement and professionalism. My thanks also to my friend and valued colleague, Robert Cribb, for his map-work and to Henri Ismail from Poros Photos for permission to use his wonderful image of a demonstration against Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono over allegations of corrupt practices in the bailout of Bank Century. Thanks also, as always, to my colleagues at the University of Sydney – especially my research partner, Lenore Lyons, who contributed immensely to the planning and realization of this project – and to my husband, Muliawarman, who is always there for me every step of the way.

Michele Ford, University of Sydney
July 2012

1 Social activism in Southeast Asia

An introduction

Michele Ford

From People Power in the Philippines to the Saffron Revolution in Myanmar, Southeast Asia is a region in constant political and social flux. It is home to myriad forms of social activism, from lone cyber-activists and small study groups to semi-professional non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and mass movements that advocate change on a plethora of issues from ethnic or religious identity, to labour and gender rights, to gross human rights violations, to the environment. Some activists and organizations operate entirely in their local or national context. Others are deeply embedded in transnational activist networks. But almost all imagine themselves to be engaged in a struggle against the state, which is simultaneously seen as enemy and potential ally in the struggle for social change.

How, then, do the concerns of global social movements play out in the social and cultural contexts of the region and particular Southeast Asian states, and vice versa? To what extent are social movement forms and repertoires of action indigenous and to what extent are they products of 'globalization from below'? What makes social activism 'real'? How collective or sustained does activism have to be before it can be called a social movement? With its history of authoritarian developmentalism and relatively weak civil society, Southeast Asia is an ideal region in which to examine these and other difficult questions that arise in social movement studies about activists' politics, motivations, tactics and strategies, and their claims to authenticity. It is these kinds of questions that the in-depth case studies of different social movements in different Southeast Asian contexts included in this volume seek to address.

Many studies of social activism in the global South use models of social movements developed in the North, although few participate in theory-making, operating instead within the strictures imposed by those models' geographical and historical roots in the United States and Europe. Others eschew such models entirely, choosing instead to locate their empirically rich accounts within an Area Studies framework or to adopt another theoretical approach. This volume takes a different tack, engaging critically with the key analytical concepts of social movement studies in order to interrogate the sometimes taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin them. The cases presented here challenge the widely held belief that social movements cannot exist without a considerable measure of democracy – in doing so, confirming that 'even in very difficult situations, it is possible to observe

a social group develop a certain representation of its situation and a certain capacity to act' (Touraine 2002: 90). In addition, they show that similar levels but different *styles* of state repression not only generate different kinds of opportunities for social activism (Caraway 2006) but also different activist cultures (Boudreau 2004). Finally, they force us to think more carefully about the extent to which local social movements have been influenced by global social movement concerns and international discourse and shaped by funding and repertoires of action; and are able to leverage transnational networks to pursue local causes.

Studying social activism in Southeast Asia

In the late 1960s, Europe, the Anglophone world and much of Latin America erupted in waves of protest against war and environmental destruction, and for civil rights, gender equality and the sexual revolution. Attempts to explain this large-scale social unrest saw the emergence of New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization Theory, two of the five approaches that have come to dominate social movement studies. New Social Movement Theory, which emerged in Western Europe in response to the tumult of the late 1960s, is concerned with movements based on identity politics (for example, sexuality) and universalist concerns (such as peace or the environment), which it contrasts with the materialist concerns of the 'old' labour movement (see Habermas 1981; Melucci 1980; Offe 1985; Touraine 1981, 1988). The goals of these 'new' social movements tend to challenge the separation between the public and the private sphere and are likely to reference aspects of everyday life and individuals' need for self-realization (Melucci 1996: 102–4). Not surprisingly, these concerns are pursued primarily within the cultural sphere and in civil society rather than through attempts to seize political power.

Outside Europe, and particularly in Latin America, this emphasis on the multiple non-material identities of individuals, spontaneity and the central role of progressive cultural practice in political transformation proved attractive to activists and intellectuals (Edelman 2001). At the same time, however, it is relatively uncontroversial to observe that the sharpness with which the distinction is drawn between 'old' and 'new' social movements is an ahistorical generalization of the first flush of European post-materialism. As well as ignoring the antecedents of supposedly 'new' movements – for example, the women's and peace movements – New Social Movement theorists have been charged with over-emphasizing new social movements' lack of engagement in the political arena and for their ambiguous claims with regard to those movements' class base.[1] Most importantly, because this body of theory is an extrapolation from a particular historical moment in a particular kind of society, it has limited descriptive power in situations where social movements are in effect a hybrid between 'old' and 'new'.

These flaws are most pronounced when New Social Movement Theory is applied outside the context in which it was developed. In the Southeast Asian context, New Social Movement Theory's emphasis on post-materialist social movements driven by the middle class has been productive, making visible the

most vibrant forms of social activism to be found in a region where the labour movement had long been domesticated by the state. But its insistence on an old–new dichotomy is counter-productive. This is a region in which middle-class social movement organizations have not only developed alongside the labour movement, but have engaged with indisputably materialist concerns such as the plight of the urban poor (Phongpaichit 2002; Weiss 2006). Middle-class activists in Indonesia, for example, not only engage with both materialist and post-materialist issues, but individuals have been known to move, for instance, from an environmental NGO to a labour NGO (Ford 2009). In other examples, social movements that focus on universalist concerns have a working-class base, as is the case with the environmental movement in Thailand (Forsyth 2001).[2]

In roughly the same period that Touraine, Melucci and others were attempting to explain the rise of identity politics in Europe, Resource Mobilization Theory emerged in the United States as a response to the puzzle of why the breakdown of traditional social patterns, shared grievances and relative deprivation – the focus of earlier scholarship on social unrest – did not explain patterns of social upheaval in the late 1960s. However, unlike New Social Movement theorists, with their emphasis on cultural politics, proponents of Resource Mobilization Theory were concerned primarily with the mechanics of social movements and, in particular, with the pivotal role of moral, cultural, human and financial resources in the operation of social movement organizations (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Oberschall 1973; Zald and McCarthy 1987). The key assumption of this model is that modern social movements are highly centralized and consist of formally structured social movement organizations that respond rationally to the opportunities available for collective action. These movements seek to address widespread grievances that exist as a result of conflicts of interest within institutionalized power relations in dialogue with the holders of formal political power. However, Resource Mobilization theorists also emphasize that shared grievance by itself is not enough: the emergence of social movements depends on the availability of the right resources and opportunities (Jenkins 1983: 528). In other words, social movements are seen to be 'an extension of politics by other means, and can be analyzed in terms of conflicts of interest just like other forms of political struggle', and 'in terms of organizational dynamics just like other forms of institutionalized action' (Buechler 1993: 218).

In addition to questioning these assumptions, critics have focused on Resource Mobilization Theory's emphasis on inputs and outputs, its side-lining of grievances, ideology and collective identity, and its emphasis on the rationality of social movement actors.[3] Concepts like access to resources and repertoires of action are useful tools in the analysis of particular social movements in Southeast Asia (e.g. Shigetomi 2009). But Resource Mobilization Theory's assumptions about the degree to which social movements are institutionalized – and the degree to which they have access to politicians – are predicated on a kind of political system that is very different from those found even in the more democratic polities in the region. Importantly, also, Resource Mobilization Theory has little to say about the state beyond its role as interlocutor. Yet more often than not, in the

Southeast Asian context the state has been perceived not just as a potential ally, but as the violator of its citizens' civil and political rights, the entity responsible for the destruction of the environment and the obstacle to social change.

In their attempts to address this obvious weakness, scholars in the North American tradition increasingly focused on the question of the state, primarily through an analysis of the 'dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics', which they dubbed 'political opportunity structures' (Tarrow 1998: 19–20; see also McAdam 1982; McAdam et al. 1996; Tarrow 1989). This iteration in the scholarship, which has come most commonly to be known as Political Process Theory, seeks to explain cycles of protest and their outcomes through an examination of the relative openness of the institutionalized political system; the stability of a broad set of elite alignment; the presence of elite allies; and the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam et al. 1996). It is an approach that has a greater emphasis on movement success and failure than on movement structure and process, and is more sensitive to the relationship between social movement organizations and their socio-political and institutional environments than traditional Resource Mobilization Theory (Caniglia and Carmin 2005). However, like both New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization Theory, the analytical tools of Political Process Theory have been shaped by their genesis in the experience of the industrialized, liberal democratic North.

Although it has evolved through its application in Latin America – and has been fruitfully applied in the Southeast Asian context – the liberal democratic experience remains the normative focus of Political Process Theory. This has led to a tendency to characterize people living under authoritarian regimes as compliant – a tendency that belies the fact that political opposition and collective action can exist even where no social movement organization directly challenges the regime, as is the case in Vietnam (Wells-Dang 2010). In addition, analyses of the relationship between regime repressiveness and the likelihood of contention within this tradition tend to emphasize the difference between non-democratic regimes and the liberal democracies of the West rather than seeking to explain the differences between particular non- or semi-democratic contexts. Yet, as Caraway (2006: 280) has argued in her work on the labour movements of India, Indonesia and Burma, significant differences exist within regime categories, and thus political openness 'is not synonymous with regime type'. Where Political Process Theory does seek to explain differences within regime categories, it tends to see individual countries as hermetically sealed political systems. Consequently, as Schock (1999) notes in his comparative analysis of social movements in the Philippines and Burma in the 1980s, it accounts for the role of influential allies and elite divisions but fails to adequately consider movements' international links.

The fourth approach of note is the US-based social constructivist approach to social movements (Benford and Snow 2000; Gamson 1992; Johnston 2009; Snow and Benford 1988). Like New Social Movement Theory, this body of scholarship is concerned with the idea of collective identity as a process and with what Benford and Snow (1988) call 'meaning work'. According to scholars working with this

approach, social movement actors do not simply convey meaning, as those working within other schools of social movement studies tend to assume. Rather, social movement organizations' fundamental task is the production and maintenance of that meaning. This task is undertaken through a process of 'framing', where:

> Collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect [*sic*] change.
>
> (Benford and Snow 2000: 615)

The concept of framing has been extremely influential in the study of social movements. It has particular resonance in the study of social activism in the authoritarian and semi-democratic contexts of Southeast Asia because it provides a powerful tool for explaining why social movement organizations choose particular points of reference over others when describing their concerns. Sometimes framing has been used by activists to deflect unwanted government attention, as was the case with the labour movement in New Order Indonesia (Ford 2009) – and still is with the feminist movement in Singapore (Lyons, this volume). Conversely framing can be used to gain access to external resources, as Li (2000) and others have shown is the case with small farmers in Borneo, who have successfully framed their local interests in such a way as to appeal to the concerns of both the indigenous rights movement and the environmental movement at the regional and global levels (see also Barney 2004; Potter 2009).[4] Framing has also proven to be extremely useful in the analysis of power relations and processes of diffusion within transnational activist networks, which play a key role in supporting – and shaping – the social movements of the South (e.g. Smith 2002).

In recent decades, the effects of globalization on social movements have become a major focus for social movement scholars for two reasons. On the one hand, the phenomenon of 'globalization from above', exemplified by the density of global financial networks and global production chains, has led to the emergence of local and transnational campaigns concerned with its economic, social and political impact. This topic is the subject of a prolific body of Northern scholarship, but has received little scholarly attention in Southeast Asia (but see Caouette 2006; Glassman 2001; Smeltzer 2009; also Caouette and Tadem, this volume). On the other hand, the rubric of 'globalization from below' has created space for the analysis of transnational networks and coalitions through which social movement actors coordinate and support one another to effect change (Portes 2000).

The transnational advocacy network (TAN) has emerged as perhaps the most influential concept in explanations of globalization from below. Defined as networks that include 'relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services' (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 2), TANs are said to engage

in information, symbolic, leverage and accountability politics to set agendas and to influence state discourse, policy and behaviour. Precisely because they operate at and across different scales, these transnational networks can draw international attention to rights-violating behaviour and empower local activists. Glassman (2001), for example, points to the process of 'scale-jumping', which Thai activists used to garner local and international support in their struggle to get justice for villagers displaced by the construction of two dams in Ubon Ratchathani province. With reference to neighbouring Malaysia, Chin (2003: 66) argues that NGOs have benefited from regional and international alliances, which have provided a means with which to apply pressure to government through channels such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations. Indeed, Malaysian NGO activists are only too aware of the protection networks can afford them in their own national context, as demonstrated by the case of Irene Fernandez, the director of the labour NGO, Tenaganita. Because of international support, Irene has been able to continue her NGO work despite decades of being subjected to government pressure and lawsuits, and even imprisonment (Ford 2007).

Three aspects of the research on transnational activism are pertinent to Southeast Asia. First, by looking across borders, rather than simply within them, this body of work creates space in which to consider the impact of particular political regimes on activists' enthusiasm for engaging transnationally and the efficacy of campaigns undertaken by transnational advocacy networks. Second, it has a strong focus on relationships between Southern social movement organizations and their Northern counterparts. Third, an important element in the operation of TANs in the Southeast Asian region is the extent to which they draw on the human rights frame as a way of challenging state practice. Adding a transnational dimension to what have long been primarily nationally focused analyses also helps overcome the problem of methodological nationalism – which is rife in Southeast Asian Studies, but also in much of Social Movement Studies.[5] It also recognizes the intensely transnational character of even apparently local struggles in the cyber age.

This is not to suggest, however, that this approach is without its limitations. As Caraway (2006: 278) has noted, scholars interested in transnational activist networks have tended to 'either focus on how domestic factors affect the *success* of particular transnational efforts or on how transnational modes of political action alter outcomes at the national level', with 'startlingly little systematic consideration' of the impact of the domestic political environment on transnational activism. In addition, much of the scholarship is underpinned by an implicit assumption that transnationalism is necessarily beneficial for local movements, and thus opportunities to 'scale up' should automatically be pursued – something that Lyons (2009), for example, has argued is not always the case. Finally, scholars have tended to have little regard for the complexities associated with diffusion within and around transnational networks. Most take it for granted that resources and ideas move centrifugally from the 'core' to the 'periphery', paying little attention to the processes through which these transfers occur, and failing to recognize that

social movement actors in the South are anything more than passive recipients (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002). At the same time, more celebratory accounts gloss over the extent to which NGOs and even mass social movement organizations rely on financial resources provided by their Northern 'partners' (Ford 2006; Frank et al. 2007). Indeed, very few accounts that engage with the social movement literature refer to this reality at all, and thus fail to recognize the impact that it has on social movement agendas and modes of activism (but see Coronado 2008; Ford and Dibley 2012; also Dibley, this volume).[6]

As this discussion suggests, each of these models has something to offer the study of social activism in Southeast Asia. Some – Political Process Theory, framing theory and the transnational approach – are better suited than others to explaining the relationship between social movements and the state or between local and global social movements. But it is the smorgasbord of analytical concepts that they collectively provide – rather than any one model – that is truly useful when it comes to understanding particular movements and particular forms of activism in the region, and then only when combined with a detailed analysis of the national and local contexts in which activism takes place.

Struggling against the state

As a site for the study of social activism, Southeast Asia offers both great variety and significant coherence. Encompassing some of the largest and the smallest countries in the world, this ethnographically varied and culturally complex region accounts for just 3 per cent of the earth's land mass but around 8.5 per cent of its population (see Map 1.1). Politically, it consists of eleven states with a great diversity of regime type, from the tiny absolute monarchy of Brunei and repressive Myanmar; to socialist Vietnam and Laos and semi-authoritarian Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore; to the sometimes-democratic Thailand, the messy democracy of the Philippines and the recently democratized polity of Indonesia; to the fledgling state of Timor-Leste, which only came into existence in the new millennium. Economically, six of these countries are middle-income countries, four of which fall into the lower middle-income category. Singapore and oil-rich Brunei are high-income countries, while Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos are located in the low-income band. Cambodia and the middle-income countries – including the socialist-oriented market economy of Vietnam – are deeply embedded into global production networks: in addition to being suppliers of natural resource-based products, with China they account for a significant proportion of the world's supply of electronics, textiles, clothing and footwear.

In geopolitical terms, the countries of Southeast Asia are bound by their shared experience of colonialism – the French in Indochina, the British in Myanmar, Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia, the Dutch in Indonesia, the Portuguese in Timor-Leste (as well as in parts of Malaysia and Indonesia during the first wave of European colonialism), and first the Spanish and then the Americans in the Philippines. Thailand may have avoided colonization, but it nevertheless felt the presence of the colonial rulers, particularly the British, in neighbouring territories (Thongchai

Map 1.1 Southeast Asia.

1997). Southeast Asia then became the key battleground in the Pacific theatre during World War II following the displacement of the colonial powers by the Japanese. Over the next 20 years all but Brunei and Timor-Leste achieved independence, only to become caught up in the superpowers' struggle for global influence during the Cold War. As the US and its allies fought to contain Communism, the new Southeast Asian nations were effectively forced into two camps: the pro-Western ASEAN and 'the rest'. Despite the growing weight attributed to human rights norms by the international community during this period, developmentalist authoritarian regimes were not only tolerated, but actively supported by the non-communist bloc.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the demise of the Left and of mass movements more generally in much of Southeast Asia, as the space available for social activism shrank.[7] Indonesia is a case in point. In the 1920s, urban Java and pockets of Sumatra experienced what Shiraishi (1990) famously dubbed 'an age in motion', in which social movements flourished in an atmosphere of continual intellectual ferment fuelled by local elites' experiences of Dutch education and contact with Dutch socialists in the colony, and in some cases by opportunities to live and study in the Netherlands. Trade unions alone had a membership of around 100,000 in the 1920s and 1930s – some five times the total membership of political parties (Ingleson 2000: 471–7). Like other social movements, the labour movement was closely tied to the nationalist movement, maintaining prominence in the revolutionary war against the Dutch (1945–49) and in the first decades after Independence. But the Left was crushed in the anti-communist purges that took place after General Suharto seized power in 1965 with support from the religious right and parts of the student movement. Building on corporatist structures established during Guided Democracy (1957–65), Suharto's New Order mandated that interest representation take place through a system of 'functional groups' designed to eliminate opportunities for open resistance.[8] Repression increased from the 1970s and into the 1980s in Indonesia, but also in Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore, Mahathir's Malaysia, and in the Philippines under Marcos. Meanwhile, in mainland Southeast Asia, Thailand had returned to military rule, the Khmer Rouge was in Cambodia, and Vietnam was recovering from the American War.

In the mid-1980s, however, a tipping point was reached with the emergence of People Power in the Philippines (see Boudreau, this volume). Around the same time, the increasing integration of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand into global production systems exposed the regimes in those countries to greater international scrutiny. This was also the period in which Northern governments began to increasingly funnel international development assistance to NGOs rather than to governments (Edwards and Hulme 1996). NGOs had been engaged in development work in the region for some decades, but the 1980s and 1990s saw an explosion in numbers: by the late 1990s, they were ubiquitous even in socialist Vietnam (Vasavakul 2003). These decades also marked a significant shift in the focus of NGOs, which began to harness the international language of human rights in their efforts to lobby governments in the region to promote social change and, increasingly, in their criticisms of governments' lack of willingness or capacity to do so

(van Tuijl 1999).[9] NGOs could play this role for a number of reasons. First and foremost, they were able to avoid the constraints placed on mass organizations in most countries in the region by governments fearful of mass movements' revolutionary potential. Also important were their international partners, which not only provided them with funds and other resources but also had the capacity to lobby governments in the North to exert pressure through diplomatic and trade relations should they be threatened with closure or their members intimidated or harmed. These transnational mechanisms became increasingly effective after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, as Northern states began to pursue human rights abuses more seriously once they no longer felt the need to provide unconditional support to the region's authoritarian and semi-democratic regimes.

Not surprisingly, a key feature of post-Cold War activism in the region has been the continued focus on the state as a campaign target, but also as an arena for the promotion of social change. The literature on social activism in Southeast Asia reflects this emphasis on the relationship between the state and civil society, and in particular on civil society's role as a promoter of democracy (e.g. Aspinall 2005; Chong 2005; Jemadu 2004; Lee Hock Guan 2004; Ng et al. 2006; Reid 2008).[10] Definitions of civil society vary widely, although all distinguish it from the state and the market.[11] Some include the private sphere of the family (e.g. Cohen and Arato 1999), but civil society is more commonly defined as an 'ideal-typical category . . . that both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organizing, self-reflexive and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions' (Keane 1998: 6). A key aspect of this approach is the distinction it draws between civil and political society, where *civil society* is 'a realm rather than . . . a specific set of actors', which is 'populated by groups and individuals who, regardless of their perspectives or organizational bases, debate, evaluate, and challenge or support official discourses, interpretations, structures, or policies', and *political society* (cf. Stepan 1988) is the arena in which political contestation over 'public power and the state apparatus' takes place (Weiss 2006: 9; also see Aspinall, this volume).

Just as contemporary social movement theory is rooted in the experiences of the late 1960s, the idea of 'civil society' experienced a renaissance in post-Communist Europe, when its development came to be seen as a fundamental requirement for societies 'seeking to recover from the excesses of state socialism' (Kumar 1993: 375). It was subsequently embraced by scholars – and by government and non-governmental donors seeking to promote democracy in the developing world. In the hands of the latter, 'civil society' effectively became just another name for the NGOs commissioned to implement their programmes. This effective equation of NGOs and civil society, which subsequently made its way into parts of the academic literature, has prompted Southeast Asia scholars like Thayer (2009) to condemn the civil society paradigm for its exclusive preoccupation with NGOs and community-based organizations as agents of political change. More fundamentally, as Rodan (1996: 4) points out, 'the analytical and normative

insistence on a state–civil society separation diverts attention from the critically important point that civil societies cannot exist as alternatives to states – only in relation to them'. As Rodan goes on to argue, assumptions of a clear boundary between state and civil society are even more problematic in Southeast Asia than they are in Europe or North America because of the extent to which social forces have become incorporated into the state.

Many scholars of Southeast Asian social movements adopt the civil society framework while at the same time pointing to its weaknesses, particularly in relation to civil society's role as an agent of democratization. Aspinall (2004: 90), for example, argues that the presence of civil society institutions is insufficient in and of itself to guarantee a shift to a more democratic society, as 'only a civil society that is truly *civil* supports democracy' (emphasis in original).[12] There is also a strong body of work critiquing the assumption that an active civil society necessarily supports processes of democratization at all. For example, Kitirianglarp and Hewison (2009), writing on Thailand, argue that social movements are driven by shifting alliances, which encourage movement leaders to compromise their goals and may even lead to situations in which leaders support non-democratic initiatives.[13] The heavy reliance on theories of civil society in the literature on Southeast Asian social movements nevertheless continues, placing it in stark contradistinction to the North American schools of social movement studies, which do not engage with the civil society paradigm – and in an even starker contrast with New Social Movement Theory, which engages with the concept of civil society but has no interest in democratization or the other concerns of big-P politics.

Outline of the book

The question of the relationship between civil society and the state in Southeast Asia is addressed in the second chapter of this volume by Garry Rodan, who fleshes out the model he developed with Kanishka Jayasuriya for thinking about different modes of civil society–state engagement in the region (Jayasuriya and Rodan 2007). Using examples from a number of countries in the region, Rodan argues that semi-democratic and even authoritarian Southeast Asian states have recognized the necessity of accommodating new social forces, but have done so primarily through sites of 'administrative' and 'societal' incorporation designed to discourage the development of independent collective and representative organizations. The key question raised by his analysis is whether – and under what conditions – civil society participation in sites of administrative and societal incorporation constitute social activism, and how these modes of participation are constrained by, but also help to shape, political space.

Relationships between political and social movements, and the effects of political incorporation on the latter, are themes taken up by Edward Aspinall and Vincent Boudreau. In Chapter Three, Aspinall pushes the boundaries of conventional understandings of what constitutes a social movement in his analysis of the Free Aceh Movement, which he argues was transformed from a social to a

political movement by its incorporation in Indonesia's electoral system after decades of separatist struggle against the state. While noting the fundamental differences between social and political movements, Aspinall emphasizes the porousness and fluidity of the boundary between these categories, citing the classic examples of the electoral wings of the labour and environmental movements at different times in established democratic systems, but also examples of Islamists and NGO activists who have made the transition to 'political society' in democratizing Southeast Asia. Arguing that armed rebellion represents 'the most visceral form of social protest imaginable', Aspinall asserts that, despite the Free Aceh Movement's statist pretensions, until the Helsinki Peace Agreement, Acehnese separatism constituted a social movement that can be analysed in terms of its framing mechanisms, political opportunity structure and capacity for resource mobilization.

In Chapter Four, Boudreau argues that 'people power' in the Philippines constituted a short-term coalescence of interest between social movements concerned with sectoral issues (for example, labour and agriculture) rather than a fundamental reframing of those movements' alliances and purposes. Within a few years of Marcos being deposed, social movement organizations had given up on the 'new politics' of systemic reform, and turned their attention to finding ways to promote their own particular sectoral reform agendas. Their two primary strategies for doing so brought them into contact with electoral politics in two ways: through alliances of convenience with mainstream politicians and through contests for the 50 lower house seats reserved under the 'party list' system which, Boudreau argues, gives activists a much greater chance of entering parliament but limits their capacity to reform mainstream politics. This, he says, constitutes a very different form of institutionalization from that dominant in the North: rather than being transformed into an interest group, Filipino social movements have maintained their grassroots base and capacity for protest while at the same time being domesticated through their links with mainstream political parties and their quest for direct political influence.

The chapters by Rodan, Aspinall and Boudreau raise important questions about the form and function of social movement organizations. How do social movement organizations change over time, and in what circumstances? What effect does this have on their values, and on their repertoires of action? What strategies do social movements use to navigate restrictive political conditions? In Chapter Five, Nicola Edwards addresses the first two of these questions in her examination of the commercialization of the organics movement and its impact on movement values. Drawing on three case studies from Indonesia, Edwards makes a complex argument for considering intention and scale when assessing the significance of increasing commercial activity for social movement organizations. In addition, she asserts, activists' engagement with the market must be understood in terms of the values of the local organics movement, which include a concern for livelihoods – an issue that is of little interest to their Northern counterparts. This point is particularly revealing since, as Edwards explains, movement organizations from across the ideological spectrum have strong international links,

and are in many ways influenced by the frames used by their international counterparts.

In Chapter Six, Dennis Arnold takes another look at the question of movement objectives and their impact on modes of activism, this time in the context of the multi-layered relationship between the democracy movement and campaigns for the rights of Burmese migrants working in the Thai border town of Mae Sot. In his chapter, Arnold contrasts the 'democracy from above' approach adopted by the Federation of Trade Unions Burma (FTUB) – an organization closely linked to the National Council of the Union of Burma – and the 'activism from below' promoted by the Yaung Chi Oo Workers Association (YCO). Echoing Boudreau's observations on the importance of distinguishing movements for democracy and their sectorally based constituents, Arnold argues that the relative weight accorded to the aims of democratization and improving conditions for migrant workers have fundamentally shaped each organization's approach, with FTUB favouring a service approach designed to ameliorate the suffering of Burmese migrant workers until such time that regime change is achieved in Myanmar and YCO seeking to empower those migrant workers by supporting their factory-based campaigns for better wages and working conditions.

Arnold's account of the Burmese labour movement in exile draws attention to two other key points. First, it emphasizes the importance of scale for the viability of social movements faced by hostile regimes. The Myanmar case – where trade unions have been forced to operate almost completely *outside* the nation-state – is an extreme example of how different scales can be used to facilitate social activism that would not otherwise be possible, but the FTUB's reliance on international financial, logistical and moral support for its work is commonplace in the region. Second, Arnold's account shows what can happen when labour activists are forced to think beyond the standard organizational forms and strategies adopted by the labour movement. In Chapter Seven, Andrew Brown and Sakdina Chatrakul Na Ayudhya flesh out this second point in their analysis of the process through which 'civil society-based labour organizing' came to be the dominant form of labour organizing in Thailand, despite a long history of trade unionism and state recognition of the right of trade unions to represent workers' interests at the industry level and in the national political sphere.[14] Arguing that these developments are symptomatic of a broader trajectory in which labour movements are continually 'made and remade' in response to structural changes in their national context, Brown and Sakdina point to the Thai labour movement's flirtation with the Yellow Shirt and Red Shirt movements as evidence for this claim.

Dominique Caouette and Teresa Tadem take up the question of the relationship between transnational activist networks, local social movement organizations and local politics in Chapter Eight. Their close examination of five Philippines-based anti-globalization networks – three local, two transnational – seeks to challenge overly simplistic descriptions of a broad cosmopolitan anti-globalization movement that operates 'above' national contexts. They conclude that, while dealing with inherently global issues, local networks remain very much driven by local politics and very much focused on the Philippine state as an arena of contention.

Similarly, the regional networks are strongly influenced by the life experiences and political persuasion of their Filipino staff. This insight is valuable empirically, given the dominance of Filipino activists in regional social movement organizations concerned with other causes. It is interesting theoretically because it forces us to consider more deeply the impact of individuals, with all their local baggage, on the goals and strategies of supposedly supra-national networks and organizations.

An equally important aspect of transnational activist networks pertains to the effects of the structurally determined power relationships embedded in them. Many scholarly accounts – and many Northern activists – cling to the assumption that such networks are based on relationships of equality. At the same time, it is common knowledge that many Southern social movement organizations are heavily reliant on material support from abroad. Indeed, debates about whether Southern NGOs can be considered social movement organizations often hinge on assessments of their financial dependence on their Northern 'partners', which force them into relationships of upward accountability (Ford 2006). Thushara Dibley takes up key elements of this debate in Chapter Nine. Having noted the paucity of literature on movements for peace in Southeast Asia – a region where peace activism tends to be absorbed into other kinds of movements, including movements for democracy and separatist movements – Dibley turns her attention to the nexus between internationally supported peacebuilding initiatives and the development of a peace movement in post-conflict Timor-Leste. On the basis of this examination, she concludes that, while international organizations' peacebuilding programmes helped form a shared identity around peace and a commitment to change among local activists, they also dictated the limits of local activists' engagement by channelling their energy into containment of the potential for renewed conflict and away from contentious action.

As Dibley's analysis intimates, international agendas are not always progressive – a fact nowhere clearer than in global responses to human trafficking since the US passed its Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000 (Ford et al. 2012). Larissa Sandy takes up this theme in Chapter Ten, where she describes Cambodian sex workers' struggle to maintain recognition of sex work as work (itself a construct of a global movement) in the face of sustained pressure on the Cambodian government to criminalize sex work, and on NGOs to shift their focus from empowerment of sex workers as workers to their rescue as victims of trafficking. Sandy's account of the 'No Exit' campaign – mounted in response to an MTV EXIT (End Exploitation and Trafficking) event in 2008 – exposes the multi-scalar character of the clash between the international sex worker rights movement and the anti-trafficking juggernaut. Building on transnational alliances established during an earlier campaign against trials among sex workers of the anti-retroviral drug Tenofovir as an HIV preventative, Cambodian sex worker activists demanded that the anti-trafficking law be repealed and persecution cease. Although not entirely successful, the international campaign that followed led to a strong reprimand of the Cambodian government by the US Department of State for its conflation of sex work and sex trafficking.

In the Cambodian case, the government leveraged international norms for its own purposes. However, elsewhere – and more commonly – international norms provide a resource for social activists seeking to challenge government policy and practice. Julian Lee's chapter on Seksualiti Merdeka, an annual sexuality rights festival in Malaysia, illustrates some of the ways in which social activists draw on international norms in their attempts to establish an alternative source of authority. Malaysia is a semi-democratic state in which Islam occupies a powerful position as the constitutionally recognized state religion and the compulsory faith of the Malay population. The values that sexuality rights activists champion are in direct conflict with the orthodox tenets of Islam, but also with the rhetoric of 'Asian Values' promoted by Mahathir Mohamad, who served as Malaysia's Prime Minister from 1981 to 2003. Although Mahathir has long since retired, Malaysian authorities continue to promote a combination of Islamic and 'Asian' values that positions homosexuality as a threat to the very foundations of Malaysian society. It is in this context, Lee argues, that sexuality rights activists resort to a combination of non-traditional modes of activism – but also alliance-building with established local bodies with human rights interests (such as the Malaysian Bar Council) and appeals to international human rights norms – in their attempt to carve out a space for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Malaysians.

The book ends with a chapter by Lenore Lyons, who returns to the theme of social activism and the state in her exploration of the Christian Right's attempt to take control of Singapore's premier feminist organization, AWARE. In chronicling the fierce and very public struggle that ensued between the usurpers and AWARE's self-styled 'old guard', Lyons reflects on many of the themes addressed elsewhere in this volume, among them state attempts to domesticate social activism while at the same time seeking to be seen as being tolerant of civil society; Asian Values and state concerns about the influence of Western discourse on Southeast Asian social movements; and conflict within social movements and social movement organizations. In particular, she illuminates two key features of social activism in the region. First, her discussion of the ways in which the frames adopted by both camps sought to appeal to government rhetoric reminds us of the extent to which activist repertoires are determined by the political space available – in this case, leading to a victory for the old guard, whose claims of inclusiveness ultimately won out against the Christian Right's appeals to family values. Second, she throws out a challenge to conventional understandings of Singapore as a polity characterized by an *absence* of social activism of any consequence by pointing out the extent to which Singaporeans mobilized in support of both sides of this debate.

As these accounts demonstrate, the terrain of social activism in Southeast Asia is both varied and complex, dictated neither by regime type nor by level of integration in transnational activist networks, though clearly influenced by both. Many of the goals that drive social movement organizations (and the strategies used to achieve them) are global: some, responses to the economic and social impact of globalization; others, products of diffusion from Northern 'partners', be they the overseas development agencies of Northern governments, Northern

NGOs or transnational activist networks. Given the region's colonial history and the level of integration in the global community of all but the most isolated countries, it is unreasonable to expect otherwise. However, as the Southeast Asian experience confirms, it is not possible to simply take a Northern template – be it New Social Movement Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, Political Process Theory, framing or the transnational approach – and apply it uncritically: in other words, to take a model in search of a case. It is only when broken down into its constituent parts and complemented by the kind of detailed local knowledge that underpins the contributions to this collection that the conceptual toolbox of social movement studies becomes truly useful in Southeast Asia or, indeed, elsewhere in the global South.

Notes

1 For a detailed overview of both sides of the debate on these questions, see Buechler (1995).
2 Malaysian scholar, Shamsul (2001: 198), even goes as far as redefining the terminology, arguing that the term 'old' social movement is best used to describe those movements 'established and legitimized by institutional structures of the state with the primary aim of supporting well-organized state-sponsored activities' whereas NGOs exemplify a 'new' form of social movement, which 'emerged to articulate differences, plurality and dissent' in the Southeast Asian context.
3 Buechler (1993) provides an overview and analysis of these and other criticisms of Resource Mobilization Theory in the context of the US women's movement.
4 The adoption of international discursive frames is not always beneficial. For example, Blackwood (2008) has shown that global activist discourse about gay and lesbian identity – discourse promoted by activists in Jakarta – has little resonance with the subjectivity of *tomboi* and their girlfriends in West Sumatra.
5 As prominent scholars within the field of research recognize, until quite recently, 'most research on social movements [was] grounded in the assumption that social movements operate within state boundaries' (McCarthy 1997: 243).
6 This is not to suggest that the question of funding has been totally ignored. For example, McCarthy (1997: 253–4) notes that, in the absence of a mass constituency, transnational social movement organizations are more reliant on stable sources of funding than local social movement organizations, and that it is important to ask where those resources come from. Moreover, a significant body of work does exist on aid projects that seek to 'develop' civil society. For a discussion of this literature, see Ford and Dibley (2011).
7 For a discussion of the Left in other parts of the ASEAN-5 from the beginning of the twentieth century, see Hewison and Rodan (1996).
8 Corporatist structures were also introduced in Singapore and Vietnam in this period.
9 Southeast Asia is certainly not the only region in which human rights NGOs constitute a key oppositional force. For example, see Sampson (2003) for a discussion on the NGOs' role in the Balkans.
10 For a discussion of social movement responses to democratization in Latin America, see Roberts (1997) and Hipsher (1998).
11 For a critique of this position, see Rodan (1996, this volume); also Edwards (this volume).
12 There is now a significant body of work on 'uncivil society', which shares the assumption that civil society is at once a 'social value and a set of social institutions' (Hall 1995: 2). This theme is particularly strong in debates around Islamic organizations'

contribution to civil society in the region, especially in Indonesia (e.g. Hefner 2000) and Malaysia. Lee (2010), for example, argues that increasing religiosity, and in particular political Islam, weakens civil society whereas Ng et al. (2006: 84–105) conclude that Islam does not necessarily curb civil society or political space in Malaysia – but both make implicit judgements about the *civility* of Islam in reaching their disparate conclusions. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, many scholars describe religion as a force that can empower domestic civil society and activism. Kyaw (2008) argues that Burmese monks were able to instigate protests and mobilize the people in the 2007 uprising as a result of their traditional role in society. Similarly, Roces (2005) argues that Filipino nuns occupied a unique place in society that allowed them to engage in pro-democracy activism during the Marcos period in a way that was not possible for other women. However, here, too, opinions differ. In his analysis of the Philippines feminist movement's contribution to the global anti-trafficking movement, Tigno (2012) points to the hegemonic influence of conservative Catholic discourse on local interpretations of sex work and, consequently, of human trafficking.

13 For a critique of the democratization literature's 'excessive focus on class actors and economic factors', see Slater (2009).

14 Non-union forms of labour movement organization are a common feature across the region. For an overview, see Ford (2009: 5–9).

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2 Southeast Asian activism and limits to independent political space

Garry Rodan

The scope and nature of political space through which different interests and ideologies, including those of social activists, can influence the exercise of state power has been a matter of continuing and unresolved contention in Southeast Asia over the last thirty years. In its most spectacular form, this has resulted in the overthrow of authoritarian regimes – as in the Philippines in 1986, Thailand in 1992 and Indonesia in 1998. Elsewhere, the absence or failure of People Power movements has not prevented the expansion of political space for social activism – including within various authoritarian regimes, where both pockets of courageous independent activity and creative attempts at absorbing social activists into the state can be found. Despite this diversity, a remarkable feature of contemporary political developments across the region has been the disarticulation of civil society organizations (CSOs) from formal political institutions. Activists have often eschewed political parties, which have been less oriented towards programmatic agendas and more geared to serve as patronage machines (see Case 2002). Especially striking is the uniform weakness of working class-based organizations, which were crucial to expanding liberal democracy's political space during its historic development in Western Europe. This has placed greater responsibility for advancing democratic change onto other organizations, and provided a context within which middle class-led organizations have been especially prominent in social activism of varying ideological orientations.

The channels through which political participation is conducted are sites of ideological struggle over competing ideas about political accountability and representation. CSOs filling the political vacuum left by weak working-class organizations and parties have been vehicles through which liberal, democratic and other ideologies have been promoted. Democracy's emphasis is on institutionalizing the authority of citizens, to whom political decision makers must be held accountable (Urbinati 2000). Liberalism, by contrast, emphasizes the scrutiny, limiting and/or discipline of state power through statutory oversight regimes, market values and the rule of law to protect individual freedoms. Hence not all of the diverse range of advocacy, monitoring and service activities of these organizations – often working closely with local authorities or international aid agencies – entail an assertion of the primacy of citizens' right to hold those in power to account. These ideological distinctions have also shaped the extent to which social activists have been able to

achieve their objectives. The political space for middle class-led social activism oriented towards improving governance institutions, implementing development programmes and advancing individual political and civil liberties has, to differing degrees across Southeast Asia, opened up significantly in the last few decades. Yet avenues for collectively advancing social democratic reform agendas of economic redistribution and social equity, let alone more radical visions, have remained limited and ineffective. Cohesive reform movements have struggled to emerge even in the Philippines, which hosts the largest volume and range of CSOs in the region. There, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, political fragmentation of social activists is the order of the day, weakening the impact of democratic forces as they compete with other social activists to shape regimes.

Historical and structural factors loom large in accounting for both the high degree of political fragmentation among social activists and the pervasive role of the state in the formal and informal institutions through which such activism is typically channelled. Crucially, the shared Cold War legacies and historical context of capitalist development in Southeast Asia have laid broad foundations for state-dominated modes of political participation, which extend to democratic regimes. In the decimation of independent civil societies in Southeast Asia during the Cold War, trade unions and peasant organizations were especially targeted (Hewison and Rodan 1996). Difficulties in rebuilding these organizations have been compounded by accelerated capitalist globalization weakening the domestic bargaining power of unions. Thus, as the working classes expanded across most of the region, their independent collective organizational capacity did not (Deyo 2006; Hutchison and Brown 2001). Middle classes across the region have also emerged in a context of state dominance or strategic control of key sectors of domestic economies. This has shaped the size, complexion and interests of the middle class, not just through the generation of powerful bureaucracies but also through direct and indirect state control over access to employment and business contracts (Robison and Goodman 1996). And while international aid is a source of funds for many middle-class activists in Southeast Asia seeking to operate independently of the state (see Arroyo and Sirker 2005), it can foster a dependence of a different sort where access to resources is tied to aligning with reform agendas set by external agencies. Moreover, some of this funding leads back to partnerships with authorities and risks of political co-option.

The following discussion starts by outlining a conceptual framework distinguishing varying modes of political participation available to activists in Southeast Asia. At its core, this framework distinguishes between the presence and absence of independent collective political participation. Importantly, the framework countenances the dynamic coexistence of different modes within the one regime, as well as variability across Southeast Asia in the relative importance of any particular mode to the way a regime operates. Subsequent sections of the chapter examine select cases of independent and state-controlled modes of political participation. The chapter argues that in the latter, expanded political participation through state-controlled institutions affords control over who can participate and on what issues, narrowing the substantive issues open to contest

among social activists. An individualizing and compartmentalizing of political conflicts also reinforces the political fragmentation of social activists. Ideologically, it is not the political rights of citizens to be represented or to hold rulers to account that are principally advanced through these modes of participation, but notions of politics as fundamentally a technical and administrative exercise of problem solving requiring good governance institutions.[1]

A framework for analysing social activism

Sophisticated analyses of the dynamic factors shaping opportunities for activists to engage in differing 'repertoires' of collective action are available in the literature (McAdam et al. 2001; Tilly and Tarrow 2006). Less developed, however, is analysis of specific state and state-sponsored institutions and ideologies and their relationship to social activism. Towards a framework capturing the full range in state–civil society relationships, Jayasuriya and Rodan (2007) developed a matrix comprising four modes of participation outside direct electoral processes. The premise of this matrix is not that a sharp state–civil society dichotomy does or can exist – indeed, conflicts internal to both the state and civil society are seen as paramount to the character and potential for social activism (Rodan 1996) – but rather that different sites of political participation can matter for the way that conflict is managed, with implications for the nature of political space and the possibilities for reform. Moreover, none of these four modes is exclusively confined to one type of regime in Southeast Asia although, by definition, independent political space is confined in authoritarian regimes.

On the top right of the matrix are modes that involve 'individualized political expression', which are relatively autonomous from the state. In the formal political sphere this can involve direct meetings with a local member of parliament. In the extra-parliamentary sphere, these expressions can include writing a protest letter or some other politically oriented article for a newspaper, signing a petition, making a call to a talkback radio station, or choosing not to purchase goods originating from a particular country because of labour practices involved in the production of those goods. Especially important nowadays is the use of Internet media such as blogs or other online avenues for individual political expression. These are extensive across the region, although less prevalent and subject to periodic suppression and tight controls under authoritarian rule, such as in Vietnam, where authorities have imprisoned bloggers for alleged anti-state activities, and in Thailand during the struggle between so-called Red and Yellow Shirt forces when *lèse-majesté* was widely employed to silence political comments on the monarchy (see Pavin 2010; Steinglass 2009). It is possible, too, for these expressions to border on, or morph into, means for inspiring or coordinating the mobilization of civil society forces.

On the bottom right of the matrix in Table 2.1 we find modes that involve collective participation that are also relatively autonomous from the state, labelled here 'civil society expression'. By definition, the extent of independent CSOs is limited under authoritarian regimes such as those of Singapore and Vietnam, but more extensive elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Characteristically, though, it is not

Table 2.1 Modes of political participation

Level of inclusion	*Sites of participation*[a]	
	State and trans-state sponsored	*Autonomous from the state*
Individual	**Administrative incorporation** • REACH (Singapore) • Law on Complaints and Denunciations (Vietnam) • National Radio Kampuchea talkback programme (Cambodia) • Citizen Charter-related grievance and feedback mechanisms (Philippines)	**Individualized political expression** • Yawning Bread, The Online Citizen (Singapore) • Blogger for Freedom, Charles Hector (Malaysia) • Bangkok Pundit, Midnight University (Thailand) • perspektif, gunheryanto (Indonesia) • PCIJ, Philippine Democracy Online (Philippines)
Collective	**Societal incorporation** • Bids & Awards Committee, Local Development Councils under Local Government Code, National Anti-Poverty Commission (Philippines) • REACH, Nominated MPs (Singapore) • Kecamatan Development Program, Musrenbang (Indonesia) • Social Investment Fund (Thailand) • Committee for Understanding and Harmony Among Religious Adherents (Malaysia)	**Civil society expression** • Assembly of the Poor, NGO-CORD (Thailand) • Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah (Indonesia) • AWARE, Transient Workers Count Too (Singapore) • Transparency and Accountability Network, Coalition Against Corruption, CODE-NGO (Philippines) • Bersih, Suaram (Malaysia)

Note

a These are only select examples to illustrate the four modes of participation.

so much class-based organizations as other CSOs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) that have in recent decades been the most significant vehicles for social activists in the region. These organizations have sought to promote protection for civil and individual rights and collective goods through a range of causes, including human rights, the environment, media freedom and rural livelihoods. Generally, though, these organizations have not pursued agendas to fundamentally transform the established political order, as was often characteristic of earlier class-based organizations engaged in social activism in Southeast Asia (see Hewison and Rodan 1996).

The other two modes refer to differing ways in which individuals and groups participate in forms of state-controlled or state-sponsored political participation, sometimes through relationships with trans-state structures involving international

and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. On the bottom left of the matrix is 'societal incorporation' providing for collective representation of societal actors within the state. This not only includes some established forms of state corporatist institutions but also more recent forms of CSO and NGO participation. For example, a wide range of social groups has been incorporated into the process of scrutinizing the awarding of government procurement contracts in the Philippines. These modes favour state-targeted and often administratively defined communities. Through nominated appointments to Singapore's parliament, for example, notional representatives of youth, labour, small business and various other social categories are brought into public policy consultation on quite specific matters of state-defined policy importance. Public policy engagement is not, however, meant to extend to politically competing with the ruling party (Rodan 2009). Crucially, under societal incorporation, which groups are deemed appropriate to represent the communities that policymakers seek to involve in consultation is not guided by democratic principles; nor are the represented meant to have the power to hold decision-makers to account. Instead, which groups are included or excluded is guided by a technocratic conception of politics as problem solving rather than a struggle over how power is structured. It is the potential utility of groups to help in addressing state-defined problems that matters, resulting in a systematic bias against avenues for representing groups with an interest in addressing conflict rooted in social class.

The top left of the matrix involves individual incorporation within the state labelled 'administrative incorporation'. Here, individuals are granted access to administrative institutions and public policy processes as a way of managing or attempting to resolve political conflict and of circumventing collective responses. This includes mechanisms for feedback and consultation on specific government policy or policy proposals and grievance and complaints mechanisms over how laws and regulations have been applied. Yet the political relationship between individuals and specific state departments and agencies is not one of democratic accountability that acknowledges or promotes the political rights of citizens to discipline elites. Instead, the framing of intrinsically political conflicts in administrative and technical terms depoliticizes the way these conflicts are understood and managed. Substantive debate and contestation over the purpose of public policies or laws is blocked or subordinated to the effective implementation or refinement of them.

In practice, the boundaries between these modes of political participation are sometimes blurred. The same actors may at different times operate in autonomous civil society sites and then in state-controlled sites, for example. Thus, conservationists and environmentalists in Singapore have worked through the independent Nature Society of Singapore as well as taken up appointments as Nominated Members of Parliament. Nevertheless, the framework helps focus analysis on the consequences for social activism of operating through different modes of political participation and invites explanation as to why some CSOs and NGOs are more inclined than others to operate through particular modes. It draws attention to both the complex layering of social activism and the need for analysis of the underlying social foundations associated with the opportunities and constraints of that activism.

Individual activism and the Internet

Within Southeast Asia, as elsewhere, the advent of new electronic and digital media technologies has significantly expanded the avenues for individualized political expression, even under authoritarian regimes. The extent, nature and impact of such expressions are nevertheless mediated by significant variations in state–society relationships and related scope for independent political space. Where vibrant CSOs exist, the options for activism can open up so that more collective forms of political participation through new media can join these individual modes of participation. In more authoritarian contexts, it is when individual modes of expression are articulated with more collective modes of participation that political elites and authorities feel most threatened and respond accordingly.

In post-authoritarian Indonesia and the Philippines blogging sites have mushroomed. One conspicuous theme to this has been their use by professional or citizen journalists (Montemayor and Azagra 2009), most of whom do not act in concert with political parties, NGOs or CSOs. Indonesia's Wimar Witoelar is among the more prominent such examples. Wimar was a popular television host of the talk show *Perspektif* before it was banned under Suharto, then a spokesperson for former President Abdurrahman Wahid. He subsequently created his own YouTube show, tvTWO, and is regularly interviewed on mainstream media programmes. His political views thus get a wide airing and exert an influence over public debate, but they are not usually intended to support or activate organized collective political action by others. There is also a vast array of other political blogs by lesser-known individuals seeking to inject their views into public discussion and debate. Occasionally, such individual political expressions provide the catalyst for large-scale coordinated social activism. When Indonesian housewife Prita Mulyasari was sued and imprisoned after a private email to 20 friends complaining about poor treatment at Omni International Hospital was forwarded to various mailing lists and forums, she inspired a Facebook support group that attracted more than 100,000 members and several blog sites supporting her cause (Agence France-Presse 2011).

Some forms of individual expression are incorporated within the causes and strategic purposes of independent collective political action. Two of Malaysia's best-known bloggers, Raja Petra Kamarudin and Charles Hector, provide clear examples of this. Here the boundaries of individual expression and social activism start to blur. Raja was a leading member of Keadilan – the reform party initially led by Anwar Ibrahim's wife, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, and subsequently Anwar himself – and headed the Free Anwar Campaign following the former Deputy Prime Minister's detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and subsequent prosecution and imprisonment in 1999. Raja's *Malaysia Today* website, which gets somewhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000 hits daily, has a reputation for regularly exposing high-level power abuses by the Malaysia government and its authorities (Bland 2010). Apart from sometimes endorsing collective protest (Raja 2011), Raja's blog site affords ample space to a range of other

reform-minded writers linked to CSOs. Hector has been involved in the human rights NGO, SUARAM, Malaysians against Death Penalty & Torture (MADPET) and the National Human Rights Society (HAKAM), among other activist organizations. In addition to his dedicated blog site, he contributes to another eight separate blogs of CSOs and political parties. His postings are thus also part of a broader set of collective political activities and objectives. It is in significant part due to links with CSOs and political parties that both Raja and Hector have been subjected to serious pressure from public authorities and powerful interests. This includes detention under the ISA for the former and a defamation suit brought against the latter for publishing information via his blog and twitter about alleged labour rights violations (Bland 2010; Loh 2011).

For bloggers in Thailand and Vietnam, authorities' perceptions of the potential for individual expressions to ignite or support social activism make their attempts to exploit the Internet for political participation problematic. Thai authorities' perceptions of individual expressions through the Internet have been shaped by a protracted struggle for power since 2005 between Yellow Shirts and Red Shirts (see Brown and Ayudhya, this volume). Fear of mass mobilizations by Red Shirts has heightened the political sensitivity of the Internet. By mid-2010, at least 113,000 websites had been blocked, deemed by Thai authorities to have posed a threat to national security, which in most cases involved material that was allegedly 'contemptuous of the country's royal family' (Luft 2008; see also Pavin 2010). In Vietnam, where CSOs are all but non-existent, the political use of the Internet by individuals assumes even greater significance. Duy Hoang (2010), spokesperson for the outlawed and US-based Viet Tan (Vietnam Reform Party) optimistically asserted that: 'We see the blogosphere in Vietnam as a *de facto* free media; social networks as the new town square where people can freely assemble; and digital activism as a cutting edge means of nonviolent struggle.' However, owing to extensive state surveillance, intimidation, harassment and arrests, this ideal is far from realized. One significant initiative has been the *Nó Kìa* club website through which individuals are invited to upload photographs of the lavish homes of government and communist party officials. Another was an online petition against bauxite mining in the ecologically sensitive Central Highlands, which attracted thousands of signatures and received nearly 20 million views. However, several bloggers were subsequently arrested for postings critical of bauxite mining, including Pham Minh Hoang, who was sentenced in 2011 to ten years in jail (Committee to Protect Journalists 2011).

Challenging authoritarianism

While the historical juncture of capitalist development in Southeast Asia and the Cold War legacy have militated against powerful and independent working class-based organizations, activists have sought to carve out relatively autonomous political space for collective activism via other organizations. Importantly, some of this activism has surfaced in authoritarian regimes, seeking to challenge the regime's institutions or values. Malaysia is such a case, where the last decade and

a half has witnessed not just growth in the number and range of NGOs and CSOs, but also some significant episodes of social movement activism (Weiss 2006).

An example of Malaysian social movement activism is the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil, Bersih). Its sustained mass mobilization strategies do not just encompass cross-ethnic alliances and diverse social forces, but also increasingly combine with embryonic party political links to advance electoral reform objectives. The genesis of Bersih can be traced to the 2004 general election in Malaysia, which led to widespread accusations of voting irregularities. In July 2005, the Joint Action Committee for Electoral Reform was established, officially launched as Bersih in November 2006 by a broad coalition of 25 CSOs and five opposition parties. In September 2007, a rally was held in Batu Buruk, Trengganu, in protest against the Electoral Commission's response to Bersih's complaints about phantom voters, vote buying, questionable recounts and physical intimidation at polling booths, despite authorities refusing a rally permit. Riot police intervened to forcefully break it up (Lee 2008: 197–8). Then when rumours of a late 2007 general election subsequently gathered momentum, an estimated 40,000–60,000 people assembled in central Kuala Lumpur in November 2007 to demand electoral reform – again, in defiance of authorities. Riot police this time deployed tear gas and water cannons, with 46 protesters arrested during or after the rally (Lee 2008: 198).[2] Although the ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional, was returned to government in 2008, it did so against the background of a major voter backlash. It received just over half the votes cast and for the first time lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority needed for constitutional reforms. It also lost government in five states. Among the new state and federal Members of Parliament were several prominent human rights social activists from CSOs and NGOs that supported Bersih, which by this time had grown to 60 and included religious, ethnic, consumer, student, labour, women's and good governance organizations (see Weiss 2009: 755).

The return of the Barisan Nasional did not mean the end of Bersih's campaign. Further controversy over electoral procedures, this time regarding the April 2011 Sarawak state election, precipitated a Bersih 2.0 March for Democracy scheduled for 9 July that year. The lead-up to the 9 July rally underscored the growing anxiety of the government over the demonstrated capacity of Bersih not only to draw support from diverse groups, but also to mobilize this outside government-controlled institutions. Seeking a compromise, the government initially endorsed the holding of the rally in Kuala Lumpur's Merdeka Stadium. However, it subsequently reneged on this, arresting 270 supporters for wearing or selling Bersih's distinctive yellow T-shirts, printing or possessing Bersih posters, or promoting Bersih objectives at public meetings and declaring Bersih an illegal organization on 1 July. Roads were subsequently blocked and train stations closed to limit access to inner city Kuala Lumpur and civil servants were also warned not to participate in any rallies. Nevertheless, around 10,000 protesters took to the streets, confronted with water cannon, tear gas and other intimidation.[3]

Acknowledging that repression would not be sufficient to stymie this social movement, Prime Minister Najib subsequently announced a nine-member

Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate and take public recommendations on electoral reform. However, this initiative had all the hallmarks of an attempt to politically manage and tactically divert the efforts of this movement. First, five of the nine on the committee were members of Barisan Nasional. Second, Najib gave no undertaking that its recommendations would be implemented before the next polls. Third, the committee's interim report on 1 December 2011 incorporated just one of Bersih's eight demands – the use of indelible ink. Fourth, Najib seemed to operate from the premise that the problem was one of changing perceptions rather than practices, describing the proposal to establish the committee as 'a smart move to dispel accusations by irresponsible parties that the present practice of election is not democratic, fair and transparent' (quoted in Pathmawathy 2011). Meanwhile, in November 2011, the government tabled the Peaceful Assembly Bill that bans street protests (Hazlan 2011), despite Najib also pledging the future repeal of repressive laws restricting civil liberties (Teoh 2011).

Irrespective of the sincerity or not behind the establishment of the Parliamentary Select Committee, its creation demonstrates that the collective independent political activities of Bersih put the ruling coalition on the defensive about the very institution through which it formally secures power. However, the strength of this movement was also part of its weakness. The heterogeneous interests and ideologies united in the desire to see electoral institutions conducted cleanly and fairly also lacked strong class-based organizations capable of extending collective protest action into strategically important sectors of the economy. Indeed, such a course of action, even if it were possible, would likely unravel this complex coalition largely led by middle-class professionals. Yet class-based political mobilization was pivotal to the earlier democratization in Western Europe and elsewhere.

Refining authoritarian rule

The most concerted attempts within an authoritarian regime to refine political co-option through administrative and societal incorporation have taken place in Singapore. Decades of repression have severely curtailed genuinely independent CSOs in the city-state. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) seeks to keep it that way as capitalist development generates new social forces and conflicts. The rationale for Singapore's new modes of political participation was explained by Goh Chok Tong (1986: 7), Prime Minister between 1989 and 2004, thus: 'What a plural society like ours needs is a tradition of government which emphasizes consensus instead of division, that includes rather than excludes, and that tries to maximize the participation of the population in the national effort, instead of minimizing it.' As Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (1999) has underlined, this is considered instrumental for elite rule: 'In a rapidly changing environment, much of the valuable up-to-date information is held by people at the frontline. Policy makers must draw on this knowledge to understand realities on the ground, and reach better solutions.'

The first major such initiative was the Feedback Unit, established in 1985 and renamed Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home (REACH) in 2006,

which entails both administrative and societal incorporation. REACH's direction is broadly set by a Supervisory Panel, whose head, a PAP Member of Parliament (MP), is appointed by the government, as are many others on the Panel. The omission of opposition politicians and independent civil society activists is precisely because the idea is to foster political 'consensus', not competition. REACH's extensive mechanisms of consultation atomize and/or compartmentalize constituencies, militating against the formation of political coalitions, beyond specific sectoral or policy issues. One way this is done is though individualized participation, another is by constructing the social categories to be represented in consultative processes or by working closely with preferred existing groups.

Administrative incorporation of individuals through online consultation channels accounts for the vast bulk of this feedback. This includes: e-Polls targeting specific respondents based on demographic characteristics deemed of interest to REACH and driven by issues or questions of interest to government ministries or agencies; e-consultation papers published by government departments and agencies and seeking either targeted or open expressions of views on existing or proposed government policies through SMS and email; e-Townhall webchats to engage citizens following major government policy announcements; the Discussion Corner, which takes place on the REACH website and often requests people's responses to certain facts, arguments or issues that REACH defines as a problem; and the General Feedback channel, where citizens are linked to relevant government departments that subsequently reply directly to the participant, with complaints or suggestions treated by authorities as technical or service quality issues to be dealt with privately.

REACH's societal incorporation includes in-person engagement through Dialogue Sessions, which are generally small and informal, involving pre-policy and post-policy consultations chaired by two Supervisory Panel members. In principle open to the general public, in practice this is largely through invitations to 'strategic partners' with a record of working cooperatively with the ruling party (Feedback Unit 2004: 35–7). There are also Policy Study Workgroups, chaired by people from the private or social sector, appointed by the Supervisory Panel, that undertake studies and submit policy proposals to government at annual conferences. A separate category of meetings that is less policy-driven is the Tea Sessions, chaired by a PAP MP and one other Supervisory Panel member. They are broken up into one or other of 14 discrete groups of Singaporeans, including students, youth, women, professionals, ethnic communities, 'heartlanders', small and medium enterprises, and multinational corporations. Observations from participants themselves suggest that this compartmentalization of issues conditions discussions in the Dialogue and Tea Sessions (Feedback Unit 2005: 10).

Clearly, participation through REACH is steered towards the limited exercise of helping to improve or implement PAP government policy. While it is possible to point to some positive outcomes (see Rodan and Jayasuriya 2007: 802–5), the processes through which groups and individuals are consulted militates against the formation of political coalitions around, and indeed beyond, specific sectoral or policy issues. Providing avenues for feedback with separate ethnic groups on

community development issues, for example, is not conducive to the formation of broad anti-poverty or social justice coalitions.

Authoritarian elites in Vietnam too have attempted to pre-empt the emergence of independent CSOs capable of providing collective representation, especially for citizens adversely affected by the momentous transformations and inequalities generated by the shift to a market economy. For the Vietnamese Communist Party, administrative incorporation has been an integral component of the political management of new social forces and conflict emanating from the transition from a command to a market economy. As well as friction over the social impacts of these policies, a host of disputes has surfaced among competing elite interests within the state and between new private commercial interests and the state. In this context, new mechanisms have been established by which citizens can voice grievances against the actions of particular administrative agencies. While this involves scrutiny of administrative decision-making, the process obstructs collective action and suppresses rather than institutionalizes genuine political accountability (Rodan and Jayasuriya 2007: 807).

A major mechanism through which this mode of political participation has been opened up is via the Law on Complaints and Denunciations, introduced in 1998 but amended several times thereafter. Complaints are meant to focus on the process of policy implementation – for example, possible wrongful decisions and corrupt administrative action by authorities – rather than the substantive ends of policy. In practice, though, the conflicts addressed through the Law on Complaints and Denunciations mostly relate to systemic problems associated with government policy and the transition to a market economy. Among the hundreds of thousands of complaints received each year, around 80 per cent concern land management issues. Other complaints include concern over the implementation of policies on the environment and social policies (*Vietnews* 2010, Asia Foundation 2009: 3).

The Law on Complaints and Denunciations does not permit collective responses. Despite recent provisions enabling lawyers to offer limited advice and support in the claimant settlement process (Asia Foundation 2009: 10), citizens must act as individuals in constructing and submitting their administrative petitions and letters of complaint. Specialized 'inspectorates' investigate complaints, the official resolution of which ultimately rests with heads of state administrative organs. These limitations have not gone unchallenged. In September 2010, activist lawyer Cu Huy Ha Vu filed a legal suit against the Vietnamese Prime Minister for signing Decision No. 136 forbidding citizens from filing class action petitions and complaints with the government. Vu contended that the decree is in violation of the Constitution, which stipulates that 'citizens have the right to gather, form groups and protest in conformity with the law' (quoted in Deutsche Presse-Agentur 2010). However, not only was the suit thrown out when the court asserted that it did not have the authority to try the Prime Minister, but Vu was subsequently charged with 'conducting anti-propaganda against the state' and sentenced to seven years in prison (Associated Press 2011).

For Vietnamese authorities, preserving the atomization of the complaints process is important to concealing the intrinsically political nature of what are

currently portrayed as purely administrative issues. The mobilization of collective interests and identities, even by legal means as advocated by Vu, is precisely what administrative incorporation is meant to pre-empt. In the absence of other less-controlled political spaces and given the extent of friction generated by Vietnam's economic and social transformation, growing recourse to the complaints mechanism is likely to continue. Consequently, the potential for conflict and disaffection associated with market development to translate into effective challenges to the political regime may also be substantially contained.

Partnerships in governance reform

Innovations in the incorporation of social activists into state-controlled institutions, or in the attempt to pre-empt the emergence of social activism in the first place, are not limited to authoritarian regimes. On the contrary, these are evident in the Philippines – the first country in the region where authoritarian rule was overthrown and where CSOs and NGOs are most extensive – and in Indonesia, the largest electoral democracy in Southeast Asia. Alongside various individual and collective independent political expressions, in both countries CSOs and NGOs are involved in a range of 'partnerships' with governments and/or multilateral and international aid agencies to promote good governance. Indeed, an increasingly significant dimension of civil society activism in both countries entails initiatives in social accountability mechanisms supported by foreign aid donors as part of governance reform and capacity building programmes. These mechanisms include monitoring and auditing functions – such as citizen report cards, social audits and society watchdogs on corruption, transparency, labour standards and electoral institutions – that may generate media attention and political pressure to activate existing formal accountability institutions. They also include direct incorporation of social actors onto state-based or government-initiated bodies, such as truth commissions, citizens' advisory boards and public procurement bodies.

In the Philippines, the passing of the Government Procurement Reform Act (PRA) in 2002 institutionalized national civil society–state partnerships, incorporating societal actors onto Bids and Awards Committees (BACs) responsible for awarding public sector contracts. The key coalition associated with the passing of the PRA was the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN), formed in November 2000. Comprising 19 NGOs, TAN included elements of the private sector, academia and assorted social and religious organizations that shared concern about the lack of transparency and the prevalence of corruption within the Estrada Administration. The initial driving force to enact the PRA comprised a coalition of state bureaucrats and international aid agencies (Campos and Syquia 2006: 11). By February 2001, though, it was concluded that links with civil society were needed to knit together the expertise and organizational ingredients for social accountability. Hence, the NGO Procurement Watch Inc. (PWI) was formed, funded by a grant from the World Bank (Campos and Syquia 2006: 16–7). What ensued was a sustained and well-coordinated political campaign resulting in the PRA becoming law in January 2003 (Campos and Syquia 2006: 25–30). This

was the democratic highpoint of the movement: the assertion of civil society authority as the imperative for change.[4]

The BACs' roles include determining the eligibility of prospective bidders, evaluating bids and recommending the award of contracts for national and local government departments, agencies, bureaus and offices. Comprising between five and seven members, the BAC is required to have at least two observers sitting in on proceedings: 'one from a duly recognized private group in a sector or discipline relevant to the procurement at hand, and the other from a non-government organization' (Republic of the Philippines 2003: 9). The technical expertise and organizational capacities of CSOs are integral to the training and recruitment of observers on the BACs and the monitoring of compliance with the Act. Accordingly, PWI's task has been both enhanced and narrowed, as it plays a pivotal role in training other NGOs, state officials and individual volunteers. PWI estimates that, of the 8,000 trained observers needed, only about 800 existed by the end of 2009 (IBP 2009). The PWI's role has thus changed from a confrontational, overtly political and explicitly democratic one in the campaign to get the Act passed, to a mainly technical role. Concern has also emerged about co-option. This was particularly evident in the reaction of civil society groups to President Arroyo's creation of a Procurement Transparency Group (PTG) in late 2007, headed by the Government Procurement Policy Board and involving five government agencies and five NGOs. With a brief to evaluate and monitor procurement activities, the establishment of PTG aroused suspicion among activists who saw it as duplicating the roles of the Ombudsman and existing BACs. Nevertheless, civil society groups continue to support the PRA and, to be sure, the roles of BAC observers and recourse to the PTG have produced some significant instances of arresting corruption – including suspected irregularities in the awarding of large-scale projects by the National Irrigation Administration (Go 2009).

While the PRA has opened up avenues for increasing accountability, practical demands consume a disproportionate civil society effort in technical rather than political exercises. An even more pervasive aspect of this is the ideological framing of corruption as the principal political and moral problem confronting the Philippines to be rectified through better-designed governance institutions. Those institutions are intended, above all else, to ensure the forces of market competition are not blunted but maximized to curb corruption. With the problem of, and solution to, corruption defined in this way, alternative reform priorities are either subordinated or marginalized. In particular, conceptions of corruption as symptomatic of structurally rooted social conflicts and consideration of the implications of this for mechanisms of political accountability and representation do not resonate with the non-adversarial state–civil society partnership model embraced by much of the Philippine middle class.

Although social accountability is not as extensive in Indonesia, governance reform agendas involve a wide range of trans-state and state-controlled institutions and programmes incorporating CSOs and NGOs. One example of societal incorporation in democratic Indonesia is the Development Planning Consultations (Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan, Musrenbang) developed after the

introduction of decentralization through Law No. 22/1999 concerning Regional Governance, under which local governments were given new authority to manage a wide range of state functions, including local planning and budget affairs. Political representation of the informal sector, and particularly the urban poor that dominate employment within it, is fundamental to effective solutions to contentious local government planning issues. This is especially so given that members of this sector are also least represented through political parties. The Musrenbang are intended to provide opportunities for non-government actors to participate in proposing, identifying and determining local development policy priorities (USAID 2007; Wilson, Djani and Masduki 2009: 2–3). However, far from empowering CSOs, NGOs and local citizens, these 'stakeholder' forums most often just add a veneer of political legitimacy to decisions tightly controlled by local elites and vested interests.

Syamsuddin et al. (2007: 9) have argued that 'elite capture' is a challenge 'to community collective action and the accommodation of community aspirations' through Musrenbang. A study by Wilson, Djani, and Masduki (2009) into Musrenbang in three quite different districts in Bali, Southeast Sulawesi and West Java also revealed a pattern of excluding participation by organizations critical of government and little or no representation of the urban poor, including street vendors, small traders and retailers. Wilson (2010) has found that the urban poor have generally also been excluded from deliberative and consultative processes in Jakarta, where estimates of street traders alone in Jakarta are as high as 350,000. The interests of these workers often conflict with those of the most wealthy and most powerful people also seeking to influence local government planning decisions. And through control over the composition of the Musrenbang, authorities are able to keep the expressions of conflict within limits partly by excluding organizations critical of government and partly by incorporating supporter groups of local politicians or political parties (see Wilson et al. 2009: 9).

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn attention to the variety of ways that political engagement occurs within Southeast Asia and the significance of this for social activism. It matters which mode of participation activism is channelled through: some permit greater potential to set reform agendas than others, some limit participation to helping those in power refine their own policies, and others offer opportunities to contest the purpose of public policy. Equally, the interests and ideologies of activists are varied, resulting in differences among social activists in the attraction to one or other mode of political participation. The relative importance and attraction of different avenues for social activism cannot be understood, either, without appreciating their structural and historical context. Dramatic economic and social transformations throughout most of Southeast Asia in the last three decades have generated new conflicts and social forces. These have elicited a variety of regime responses and accommodations, including the creation of new democratic and non-democratic political spaces. Neither the legacy of the Cold War nor advanced

economic globalization has been favourable to class-based forms of collective organization, especially trade unions. State-led development and various forms of 'crony capitalism' have also limited the social base for genuinely independent middle classes in much of the region. These are not the social foundations for strong and independent civil societies, let alone cohesive social democratic reform movements.

Consequently, social forces seeking to advance democratic reform agendas have had to pursue different alliances and strategies from those that proved effective in earlier democratizations in Western Europe and elsewhere. As this volume testifies, there is much creative effort along these lines throughout the region. However, democratic agendas can be subsumed by liberal and moral reform campaigns that emphasize values of efficiency or integrity of rulers and/or institutions but do not necessarily champion greater political authority of the masses. Social movements seeking to arrest corruption are a prime example. Indeed, state- and trans state-sponsored political spaces promoting notions of 'empowerment' and 'good governance' often find a resonance with liberal activists aspiring to non-democratic goals or are grasped by other activists for lack of alternative organizational avenues. In essence, then, the different modes of political participation illustrated in this chapter give expression to more than just varying mechanisms through which activism can be directed or stymied. These are, in effect, sites of ideological struggle over competing ideas of political representation. Such ideas extend beyond the democratic claim that the represented must have the capacity and authority to discipline those supposedly acting on their behalf.

Notes

1 Research for this essay was supported by Australian Research Council funding for a Discovery Project (1093214), 'Representation and Political Regimes in Southeast Asia'.

2 In an attempt to appease demonstrators, the Electoral Commission agreed to one of Bersih's substantive demands: the use of indelible ink to distinguish those who had voted. However, on the eve of the general election that transpired in March 2008, the EC reneged on this undertaking (Weiss 2009: 752).

3 All told, more than 1,600 arrests were made (Economist 2011).

4 Another alliance of NGOs, the Coalition against Corruption (CAC), was formed in 2004 to monitor compliance with the Act.

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3 Separatism in Aceh

From social rebellion to political movement

Edward Aspinall

Some theoretical literature posits a clear distinction between civil society and political society. For the noted scholar of democratization, Alfred Stepan, for example, civil society is 'that arena where social movements . . . and civic organizations from all classes . . . attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements so they can express themselves and advance their interests' (Stepan 1988: 3–4). Political society, by contrast, is the arena 'in which the polity specifically arranges itself for political contestation to gain control over public power and the state apparatus' (Stepan 1988: 4). Likewise, we can in abstract terms distinguish between social movements, defined as 'recurrent patterns of collective activities which are partially institutionalized, value-oriented and anti-systemic in their form and symbolism' (Pakulski 1991: xiv), and political movements, which seek not merely to oppose, critique or wring concessions from government but to seize full or partial control of it by overthrowing, colonizing, infiltrating or inserting personnel into state institutions.

This theoretical distinction between social and political movements is sustainable even if we remember that social movements by definition almost always engage with the state. Thus in Tilly's (2008: 5) influential formulation, contentious politics necessarily involves 'interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, in which governments appear either as target, initiators of claims, or third parties'. Most social movements seek concessions from the state in the form of policy changes, protection or some other form of action or inaction. Most social movements are therefore involved in the sphere of formal politics, understood broadly as the world of state power and public authority. None of this necessarily implies, however, that social movement activists will themselves become part of political society, in Stepan's sense, by forming parties, running in elections or joining legislatures. Indeed, many protest movements explicitly reject this option, viewing the world of partisanship and official politics as dirty and polluting.[1]

In reality, the boundary between social and political movements is almost always fluid. Especially in more or less democratic regimes, most effective social movements are pulled toward participation in political society, often initially through endorsing and supporting sympathetic candidates in elections for public office, then later, when social movement activists form political parties and

compete in elections themselves. Social movements that have traversed this path include classic examples like labour movements and trade unions in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, and environmental movements a century later. In Southeast Asia, too, we find many similar examples, such as in Indonesia with the recent institutionalization of one strand of campus-based Islamist activism in the Prosperous Justice Party (Tomsa 2011) or the emergence of the Justice Party in Malaysia out of the reformasi protests of the late 1990s (Weiss 2006). NGO and social movement activists promoting social and political reform in Indonesia have so far not succeeded in creating their own political party, but many individuals from such organizations have sought to take part in political society by joining existing parties and attempting to influence government policy formulation from within (Weiss and Aspinall 2012; Mietzner in press).

Even in non-democratic settings, where options for participation in electoral politics are limited, there can nevertheless be many pathways for inclusion of social movement activists into official politics, for example through recruitment into governing parties, government-linked social organizations, policy think tanks or directly into government departments or other state agencies. In Suharto's Indonesia, interest groups including women and labour were corralled into 'functional groups' designed to circumvent activism (Reeve 1985). Towards the end of his presidency, Islamic activists were incorporated through the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (Hefner 1993). From the perspective of regime leaders, incorporating social movement activists in this way can serve to suppress activism or help to broaden the regime's support base. For the activists concerned, incorporation can provide direct access to levers of governmental decision-making authority and policy formulation that they hitherto had tried to influence only from the outside. In more democratic polities, regimes use systematic rather than *ad hoc* means to broaden their social base, offering participation in elections as an institutionalized pathway for incorporating social movements and other social forces into formal politics and government decision-making.

This chapter explores the interplay of social and political activism by examining social rebellion and its political transformation in the province of Aceh at Indonesia's northwestern periphery. Over the last three decades, the province became the site of deeply contentious – and often violent – social protest, much of it focused on the demand for the province's independence from Indonesia. An armed separatist movement, the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) led a guerrilla war, fighting over control of rural parts of the province with government soldiers. After the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, there was also an explosion of myriad forms of protest and other social activism in the province, some of it calling for independence, some seeking to achieve a range of other social and political objectives.

Throughout this period, Aceh's rebels and other social activists had an ambivalent relationship to formal politics. Armed rebellion is in many ways the most visceral form of social protest imaginable, with rebels articulating social grievances and condemning in absolute terms the state and formal politics. GAM fighters in Aceh did not seek to influence or reform the Indonesian state; they

wanted to expel it from Aceh altogether. At the same time, Aceh's nationalists had aspirations for statehood themselves, even as they rejected the Indonesian state. GAM activists, in particular, tried to construct a set of Acehnese shadow state institutions, or at least imagined themselves as doing so. Their movement had all the accoutrements of a modern state, complete with a head of state, a prime minister, cabinet, army, judiciary and police force, even if the occupants of these posts and institutions were typically either in exile or in constant danger of being captured or killed by the Indonesian security forces. Many social movement activists outside GAM agreed that independence was paramount, and campaigned for an independence referendum.

A dramatic transformation of political dynamics in the territory came with the signing of a peace agreement by GAM and the Indonesian government in August 2005. Realizing that their quest to expel Indonesian troops from Acehnese territory and win international support for independence would not succeed, GAM leaders agreed to give up their movement's arms and their goal of independence in exchange for the opportunity to participate in electoral competition and seek to win local governmental power. The movement plunged headlong into political society. GAM leaders won positions in local executives, including the governorship, and built a political party that dominated many of Aceh's local parliaments. This transformation was facilitated, and encouraged, by a reframing of the issues at the heart of political contention in Aceh. When they fought for Aceh's independence, GAM fighters had claimed they did so to uphold the dignity of the Acehnese nation, and to assert a right to sovereignty that was an inheritance from former generations. After peace, though they still viewed Acehneseness as an inherited identity, they put the right to democratic participation at the centre of their conceptualization of it. Rather than rejecting Indonesia, they sought to carve out within it an autonomous realm for the expression of Acehnese interests and identity. Rebellion as a form of social protest thus gave way to a party and parliamentary struggle, still grafted awkwardly onto the ethos and outlook of a rebel movement.

Armed struggle as social protest

Much recent research on civil wars and armed rebellions focuses on the enabling conditions that make rebellion possible, such as natural resource endowments, presence of potential recruits and features of the terrain (Collier and Hoeffler 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Others emphasize the grievances that inspire revolt, such as 'reaction to predatory state repression that threatens the organizational resources and lives of political Islamists' (Hafez 2004: xvi). However, armed rebellion is in many ways a form of contentious politics, and it can be comprehended in terms of political opportunity structure, framing mechanisms and resource mobilization in much the same way as other social movements can be analysed.

Rebellion in Aceh began in the context of a political opportunity structure that provided few pathways for peaceful articulation of social protest, yet which was

conducive to armed revolt. The Free Aceh Movement was founded in December 1976 by Hasan Tiro, an Acehnese intellectual who had for much of the previous two decades lived in exile in the United States. The territory had a history of political contention that Tiro could draw and build upon when creating his movement. In the late nineteenth century, Aceh had been a site of one of the most protracted and bloody wars of colonial expansion in Southeast Asia, when local people – many of them motivated by religious scholars and their exhortations to holy war – resisted Dutch attempts to incorporate the territory into their expanding Netherlands East Indies. The Dutch eventually succeeded in their aim, but sporadic resistance continued in Aceh even after they consolidated their control in the early twentieth century. This history of resistance in turn helped fuel intense mobilization and resistance to the return of the Dutch during Indonesia's 1945–49 struggle for independence, which in Aceh partly took the form of a social revolution directed at the hereditary rulers (*uleebalang*) through whom the Dutch had ruled Aceh. Then, after Indonesia achieved independence, Aceh was again the site of armed conflict, this time from 1953 when most of the men who had led Aceh through the independence struggle joined the Darul Islam (Abode of Islam) revolt then taking place in several parts of Indonesia. They sought not only to assert greater Acehnese autonomy *vis-à-vis* central government authority, but also to transform Indonesia into an Islamic state (for overviews of Acehnese history, see Reid 1969, 2006; Aspinall 2009b).

This recurring cycle of revolt, repression and stabilization created in Aceh what one scholar has called 'a habitus of violence' (McCarthy 2007: 322) in which armed resistance to outside powers was highly valued. In popularizing his new movement, Hasan Tiro drew on this martial element in Acehnese tradition, evoking past struggles repetitively and calling on Acehnese to live up to the duties imposed by the sacrifices of earlier generations. His call to revolt came at a time when avenues for alternative forms of political expression were closing in Aceh. Over a decade earlier, the Darul Islam rebellion had been brought to an end in part by means of a compromise whereby Aceh was offered 'Special Territory' status within Indonesia. However, the government of President Suharto was not only authoritarian but also highly centralizing, and in practice the provincial government enjoyed little autonomy, generating political alienation (Kell 1995). The tradition of Islamic protest in the province, meanwhile, still found expression in the 1970s in the five-yearly election campaigns by the Islamic-based Development Unity Party, but security force pressure on the leaders and followers of this party were undermining its capacity to represent a viable political alternative. At the same time, the opening of a major new natural gas project in North Aceh was creating resentment about the exploitation of Aceh's natural riches for the benefit of outsiders.

One of the characteristic features of Hasan Tiro's vision, which contributed powerfully to the appeal of his movement, was that he offered a new nationalist framework for interpreting Aceh's history, contemporary condition and future. This framework was at once novel, simple and inspiring for many Acehnese. In this interpretation, the Acehnese represented a distinct nation that had existed

prior even to the creation of the idea of Indonesia, and that was now subject to neo-colonial subjugation by Indonesia which, he insisted, was merely a front for Javanese dominance. Evoking the golden age of the sixteenth century Acehnese sultanate, he proclaimed that Aceh could regain its greatness if only the Acehnese remembered their 'bloodline' and threw off their attachment to the alien cultural and political domination of the Javanese.[2]

This was an interpretation that was at first strange for many Acehnese (Aspinall 2009b: 79) but which resonated increasingly strongly as the guerrilla insurgency began to take hold. GAM leaders now interpreted every instance of Indonesian government malpractice or brutality in the province – and there were plenty over the years – as evidence of the government's 'neo-colonial' character and intentions. When Indonesian military troops killed or tortured civilians in their attempts to eradicate the insurgency – with these abuses becoming especially severe during the early 1990s – GAM ideologues pointed to such behaviour as a continuation of Dutch colonial practices. The Indonesian military, GAM leaders argued, not only behaved *like* an alien occupying army in Aceh, it *was* an alien occupying army.

This interpretation became especially powerful in the aftermath of the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, when the tides of history seemed, for a brief moment, to be turning in favour of Aceh's independence. A wave of communal conflict around the country suggested to some Acehnese that the Indonesian state was on the verge of breaking up. The UN-supervised independence referendum in East Timor in 1999 provided them with what they saw as a precedent and model. Growing interest in the Aceh conflict by international humanitarian actors, and international efforts to resolve the conflict there, meanwhile inspired GAM leaders with the hope that they could 'internationalize' the Aceh conflict in a way that would lead to independence (Aspinall 2002; Schulze 2004: 51–4).

As with any social movement, resource mobilization was central. Indeed, one key to GAM's ability to mount what eventually became the most effective armed challenge to the Indonesian state was its organizational cohesion. In formal terms, GAM possessed a pyramidal structure of regional military commands and civilian leaders. At its peak was the exiled 'guardian of the state' (*wali nanggroe*), Hasan Tiro, who lived in Sweden following his escape from Aceh after his initial attempt to start an armed struggle there failed in the late 1970s. These formal structures, however, were less important than the affective bonds that cemented the movement. The movement cultivated a cult of unquestioning loyalty to its exiled leaders, especially Hasan Tiro, reinforced by sacred oaths of allegiance and myths about Tiro's intellectual, diplomatic and strategic skills. Inside Aceh, the movement grew along the web of friendship, familial and other personal networks that infused rural Acehnese society, facilitating underground methods. GAM also depended upon the cohesiveness of village society and its suspicion of outsiders to protect it from state intelligence agencies. As GAM emerged as a significant military force, local strong men and village toughs commanded guerrilla units, winning further loyalty through their personal reputations for bravery or ruthlessness. Overall, although there was considerable variation, even fractiousness, in the movement at the local level, and serious splits among the exiles, within Aceh

the movement remained united on its overarching independence goal and in support of its exiled leaders. This unity was in stark contrast to the fragmentation that marked rural insurgencies in places like the Southern Philippines and Southern Thailand (Liow 2006).

Most members of the movement saw armed struggle as their chief strategy. Although even at the height of the movement's military strength in 1999–2003 they never had the capacity to take on the Indonesian military in major set-piece battles, they became masters of ambush, hit-and-run and sneak attacks. As I have argued elsewhere, there was a performative aspect to much of this, with many armed actions serving primarily to demonstrate the bravery of the fighters concerned to local communities (Aspinall 2009b: 171–2). But there was also an underlying strategy. Though many fighters believed their goal was to expel Indonesian forces from Aceh by force of arms, the more sophisticated leaders doubted this was achievable. Instead, they aimed 'to make Aceh ungovernable in order to make Indonesia pay the highest price possible for retention of this territory' (Schulze 2004: 34). As time passed, they increasingly believed that by doing so they would be able to force the government into negotiating Aceh's final status from a position of weakness. Accordingly, the movement's leaders also became increasingly concerned to draw the international community into the resolution of the Aceh conflict, hoping that international intervention might pave the way to independence.

If armed rebellion emerged as the dominant mode of social protest in the repressive political climate of the New Order Aceh, the collapse of that regime in 1998 provided the context for a dramatic expansion of the 'public participation in collective making of claims' (Tilly 2008: 8) that is essential to social movements that operate openly and non-violently in the public arena. Accordingly, in 1998–99 there was a dramatic proliferation of student protest, NGOs, Islamic activism and other forms of social movements in Aceh. Much of the initial focus of this new civil society activism was on exposing and condemning the brutality of the Indonesian military's earlier efforts to suppress the insurgency. This mood of condemnation soon hardened, especially when military abuses resumed, and in 1999–2000 a mass-based movement emerged in favour of a referendum for independent statehood that mobilized some massive demonstrations in the capital, Banda Aceh, and in smaller towns around Aceh.

Space does not permit thorough consideration of this period in Acehnese politics (see Aspinall 2009b: 121–50 for one account). But what is particularly significant is that this new open social mobilization, and the involvement in nationalist politics of a new generation of activists with backgrounds in Indonesia-wide networks of student and NGO activism, also contributed to a subtle shift in the ideological character of Acehnese nationalism. Many of the new activists portrayed Aceh's right to independence not as an inheritance from the past, but as the consequence of the Indonesian state's failure to uphold its social contract with the Acehnese. They promoted a referendum as the most democratic means possible to either renegotiate or reject that contract (even if most hoped for independence). By doing so, they injected a strong element of democratic thinking

into Acehnese nationalist thinking, and at least opened the possibility of finding new terms for Aceh's inclusion in the Indonesian republic. In immediate terms, however, the post-Suharto collapse of governmental authority was most significant insofar that it opened space for a greatly expanded insurgency by GAM. At the same time, successive post-Suharto Indonesian governments realized that a more conciliatory approach was needed, and they offered various reforms to the Acehnese (notably, in the shape of a special autonomy law for Aceh in 2001) and made early efforts to negotiate a peace deal with GAM. GAM leaders, however, remained committed to their goal of complete independence, reading the government's willingness to negotiate as a sign of weakness.

Several factors conspired to make the dominant tenor of social movement politics in Aceh rejectionist, with civil society activists and armed guerrillas alike condemning the Indonesian state and calling for its expulsion from their territory. Above all, this climate was the result of a remarkably successful effort at strategic framing by nationalist activists: social and political problems seen in other provinces as requiring reformist remedies were in Aceh typically portrayed as evidence of the imposition of neo-colonial Indonesian dominance.[3] Other factors, such as the availability of a stock of cultural memories of past resistance to outside forces, meant that this nationalist framing grew out of 'existing cultural definitions' (Zald 1996: 273), providing it with considerable social ballast. And, as is so often the case, the abuses committed by the military in its attempts to eradicate what was at first only a tiny insurgency fuelled alienation and gave credence to ethno-nationalist claims about neo-colonial misrule (Robinson 1998; Aspinall 2006).

This confluence of factors made separatism the dominant mode of contentious politics in Aceh. People who, had they lived in other Indonesian provinces, would have been drawn to other forms of social or political activism – Islamic protest movements, NGOs or political gangsterism for example – in Aceh saw the promise of independence so compelling that they affiliated with the pro-independence movement, in either its armed or its unarmed manifestations.

The coming of the peace and the reframing of Acehnese nationalism

The background to the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding by representatives of GAM and the Indonesian government in August 2005 has been well-rehearsed in the literature on the subject (e.g. Aspinall 2005; Morfit 2007). Much attention has focused on the impact of the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004, which killed 165,000 people in Aceh, and provided impetus to the peace talks, both by increasing the international presence in the territory as foreign governments and agencies raced to provide relief and by allowing both sides to point to the humanitarian imperative when dealing with hardliners in their own camps and explaining why they had to make concessions. For the GAM leadership, at least as important was the military deadlock which had developed over several years. At the turn of the twenty-first century, GAM leaders and

fighters had been confident that they would quickly be able to win Aceh's independence by a combination of armed struggle and international intervention. But in 2003, the government had declared a 'military emergency' in the province and launched a major new offensive, seriously depleting GAM forces and driving them into the forested interior. Their reversals made the GAM leadership more pessimistic about the likelihood of achieving Aceh's independence by force of arms, and more receptive to compromise.

Unlike half a decade earlier, when the collapse of the Suharto government provided the context for a sudden increase in GAM's armed activity, there was no dramatic shift in the national-level political opportunity structure now driving GAM to back away from the independence goal. However, the election in late 2004 of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to the Indonesian presidency who, along with Vice President Jusuf Kalla, was more inclined to pursue a peaceful resolution of the conflict, also helped to convince the GAM leadership that they now had negotiating partners they could trust. In subsequent months, President Yudhoyono ensured that military spoilers would not undermine the peace deal, something that had been a serious impediment to previous peace efforts (Mietzner 2006: 49–51).

The key to the deal embodied in the Helsinki MoU was a trade: GAM gave up its arms and its goal of independence in exchange for expanded autonomy for Aceh and a chance to compete for political power locally within Aceh. Two provisions of the agreement were especially important: one allowed local parties to compete in legislative elections in the province (elsewhere in Indonesia registration requirements ensure that only parties with a broad national presence could compete); another was widely interpreted as allowing independent candidates (i.e. candidates not endorsed by officially-recognized political parties) to compete in direct elections for local executive government head positions. Suddenly, GAM leaders were eligible to compete for local government power, and they did so with great success. In December 2006, the former GAM propagandist, Irwandi Yusuf was elected as governor of the province, with 38 per cent of the vote. At the same time, and over following months, candidates endorsed by the movement were elected to head executive governments in 10 of the territory's 23 districts and municipalities. Later, GAM supporters formed a political party, Partai Aceh, which in April 2009 fell just short of winning an absolute majority in the provincial legislature, but became by far the largest party represented there. It also won absolute majorities in 7 out of the 23 district and municipal assemblies, and won the largest vote in 16.[4] GAM may have failed in its goal of making Aceh independent, but the movement had succeeded in placing key leaders in important positions of local government power in the province.

At one level these changes signalled a dramatic shift in the nature of the movement from a social rebellion to a political movement, and from a force located outside and defined against the state to one that was partly integrated within state institutions (Aspinall 2007). These changes entailed in turn dramatic transformation in both the ideational framing and the organizational character of the movement. First, the movement was required to reconsider its ideological appeal

and justification. During the war years, GAM's ideological appeal was limited to a simple and endlessly repeated script: its leaders stressed the nobility and glorious history of the Acehnese nation, emphasized the incompatibility of Acehnese and Indonesian identities, condemned Indonesian rule as alien and oppressive and exhorted Acehnese citizens to free themselves and realize Aceh's national destiny by supporting the struggle for independence. After the 2005 peace deal, its leaders had to explain how and why they had accepted that Aceh would remain part of Indonesia, a position they had previously condemned as being a betrayal of Aceh's national identity and sovereign birthright when espoused by others. They partly did this by saying that the suffering of Aceh's people caused by the tsunami and protracted conflict had made compromise unavoidable. But they also responded by refashioning the goals of the movement and claiming it had always been fundamentally interested in securing the democratic rights of the Acehnese people (Aspinall 2009b: 240–1) and that the democratic gains secured in the Helsinki MoU were therefore an appropriate outcome of its struggle.

In broad terms, movement leaders, in their attempts to explain themselves and win the support of the population – at election times in particular – could still rely on a large degree of residual loyalty from many people, especially in parts of Aceh where the insurgency and government counter-insurgency operations had been most intense. In such places, there were bitter memories of the brutality of government security forces, and GAM leaders could readily evoke the sacrifices made by former generations of independence fighters and call on current generations to remain true to their struggle, even if the ultimate goal was now not so clear. Over time, the Helsinki MoU itself came to fill the vacuum left by the removal of the independence goal. The peace agreement has been fetishized by movement supporters: whenever challenged to explain their goals, they would simply repeat, mantra-like, that they wanted to ensure that the Helsinki MoU would be implemented in full.[5] In this vision, Aceh and the Acehnese people remained the referent object of the movement's discourse, but if their historical vindication was previously to be found in independence, now it was to be in the promise of self-government and economic prosperity embodied in the MoU. Not surprisingly, almost no GAM-turned-Partai Aceh activists express positive enthusiasm for Indonesia or Indonesian identity; even if they could not now publically support independence, they still sought to create a clear 'dividing line' between Aceh and Indonesia.

At the same time, in the attempt to build support among wider sections of the population, movement leaders began to place more emphasis on economic development and social welfare policies, with a decidedly populist twist. During the conflict years, movement leaders had pointed to Acehnese poverty and disadvantage as one major justification for their rebellion but had virtually no social or economic programme. Apart from emphasizing that rural poverty, underdevelopment and poor living standards were symptomatic of Indonesian misrule, movement leaders had little to say about such matters. Instead, they insisted that such problems would be resolved once Aceh achieved independence, when it would be free to order its own affairs as it saw fit and could enjoy its natural resources. In

this utopian vision, GAM leaders had often pointed to the oil-rich statelet of Brunei as a possible model.

After the 2005 peace deal, movement leaders found themselves holding local executive and legislative government posts. They thus had to offer concrete policies to respond to the problems of poverty and marginalization they had so long emphasized in their nationalist propaganda. Partai Aceh members responded with a range of populist social welfare and rural development policies. Governor Irwandi Yusuf, in particular, launched a number of credit and development schemes that were designed to increase his support in Aceh's villages. Most spectacularly, he launched a free health insurance programme that was paid for in large by the special autonomy funds that Aceh received as a result of the peace deal. In adopting these policies, Irwandi and other former GAM leaders recast the meaning of their past struggle, reinterpreting it as a struggle against Acehnese poverty and disadvantage that was now to be realized through economic and welfare polices, rather than armed struggle. As Irwandi put it in one speech: 'the struggle is not over until all of the people of Aceh are prosperous and affluent' (Ranup Sigapu 2009).

If the ideological challenge was considerable, the organizational one was no less so. The Free Aceh Movement went into the peace with a formidable guerrilla machinery. The Helsinki MoU mentioned the movement as having 3,000 combatants. A subsequent survey-based estimate by a multi-stakeholder review of the peace process put the number at 14,300 (MSR 2009: 18). There was a much larger group of people in the movement's wider support network. This network provided the movement with a very strong political machinery, but the demobilization of so many fighters and their transition to civilian life posed numerous problems. Tensions seldom emerged between ex-combatants and ordinary villagers because, unlike in some post-conflict situations, GAM fighters had rarely been alienated from their home communities during the war years (Barron and Burke 2008; Barron 2009). Instead, with the end of the armed struggle against the Indonesian state, some former fighters turned their skills at, and reputations for, violence to other purposes. For example, there is evidence that supporters of Partai Aceh, especially in areas where the insurgency was strong, intimidated campaigners for other parties at election times, as well as voters (Barter 2011: 127–9).

Use of violence and intimidation was even more widespread in economic life, with former combatants engaging in a scramble for economic resources and patronage. As during the conflict years, the GAM structure remained in some respects a massive income-generating and distribution machine, and its members continued to use predatory methods honed during the conflict. Local commanders exercised political pressure to ensure the distribution of development projects and other economic opportunities to members, supporters and communities. An important source of patronage was construction contracts which, as in other parts of Indonesia, were particularly vulnerable to predation because they involve government officials funnelling large, concentrated sums of money into the community. GAM supporters were able to ensure the distribution of construction contracts to members or favoured contractors by means of direct political

influence (especially in districts where GAM supporters were now dominant in local government), by intimidation of tendering committees and rival contractors and control of access to construction sites in rural areas (Aspinall 2009a). In some cases, such practices led to rapid enrichment of former guerrilla commanders, causing dissension in the ranks and wider disillusionment.

An underlying problem was the sense of purposeless and disillusionment felt by many of the ex-combatants and their supporters. Many village men had been able to find personal fulfilment in the armed struggle, their role valorized by a heroic nationalist script that emphasized personal qualities of bravery, self-sacrifice and hardness. For many such people, the transition to civilian life and politics was disorienting. In the past they could contribute to the military struggle against the Indonesian state, either directly or by serving in the underground network that supplied the fighters. However, few of them were equipped with the sorts of skills needed to develop a modern political movement and, with the end of the armed resistance, many experienced considerable loss of status. It became very common to meet former fighters in Aceh who expressed regret at the loss of camaraderie and unity they experienced 'in the jungle'. Such disillusionment was heightened when individuals felt they were losing out in the distribution of economic resources. Sometimes these discontents erupt into violence, as when a gang led by an ex-GAM fighter known as Gambit engaged in a spree of banditry in East Aceh. After shooting up the homes of former GAM leaders who had become members of local parliament, Gambit told the press: 'We've done all that to remind the former GAM combatants who have joined the local government in Aceh to always remember the little people' (Serambi Indonesia 2011).

Overlaid on these local-level frictions, the movement also experienced significant splits and divisions in its upper levels, a common occurrence in the difficult transition from social to political movement. These began in the lead-up to the 2006 executive election when a leadership group centred around GAM's 'prime minister', Malik Mahmud, endorsed a local intellectual as its candidate for governor, a decision challenged by Irwandi Yusuf and many former local commanders of the guerrilla movement who felt that GAM should run its own candidate. Irwandi went on to compete and win against the candidate endorsed by the older-generation leaders after a campaign in which groups of GAM supporters faced off against each other and in support of rival candidates in many parts of Aceh, causing considerable tension (International Crisis Group 2007). The leadership group around Malik Mahmud, claiming the mantle of Hasan Tiro's authority after the latter's death in 2010, continued to dominate GAM leadership positions and became the main force in Partai Aceh. Once this party dominated the local legislature after the 2009 parliamentary elections, the latter body was involved in many conflicts with Irwandi's provincial administration.

Although no deep ideological or programmatic divisions were involved, the struggle for control of the legacy of the armed struggle and of Acehnese nationalism became both personal and bitter. In a movement that had emerged during years of military struggle, great emphasis was placed on a command culture of loyalty and obedience. Consequently, Irwandi and his supporters were often

accused of being 'traitors', a serious accusation that had often led to summary executions during the conflict years. In late 2011, conflict again erupted in the lead-up to gubernatorial elections scheduled for the end of the year. Irwandi had decided to run once more as an independent candidate, prompting a dispute over the legality of his candidacy and a threatened boycott by Partai Aceh. The problem was that in June 2011, the provincial parliament – dominated by Partai Aceh – had passed an election regulation disallowing independent candidates (in direct contravention of a Constitutional Court ruling). Governor Irwandi refused to assent to this regulation, and Aceh's electoral commission ignored it, allowing independents, including Irwandi, to register their candidacy. In response, Partai Aceh leaders refused to participate in the election and called on their followers to boycott it. An internal conflict between former GAM supporters had escalated into a full-blown political and legal crisis. Partai Aceh spokespeople said their position was a defence of the principles of self-government and the Helsinki MoU. Many commentators, however, accused them of being motivated primarily by a desire to prevent Irwandi from contesting the election.[6] The movement which had once faced off against the Indonesian army in a bitter and violent guerrilla war was now once again tearing itself apart in the peaceful contest for political office. Eventually, after considerable controversy and some violence, Partai Aceh agreed to take part and its candidate, Zaini Abdullah, won a resounding victory over Irwandi Yusuf when the elections were finally held in April 2012.

Conclusion

As suggested at the start of this chapter, the boundary between social movements and formal politics is often so porous as to be virtually non-existent. Contentious politics, recalling Tilly's definition, always involves governments, whether as 'target, initiators of claims, or third parties'. Social movement activists universally have to confront the question of governmental power, and they typically demand specified action – or inaction – from public authorities. Yet, there remains a distinction between the worlds of social and political movements, with the former concerned primarily to influence governments, the latter aiming also to govern. When movements shift from the first to the second mode, it can be a disorienting experience for the activists involved, especially when they are habituated to view government with suspicion and hostility as a dangerous adversary or as a pernicious corrupting force.

The transition from social to political movement in Aceh was particularly traumatic for many movement adherents because it was so sudden. In normal circumstances, at least in democratic polities, activists in social movements have extended periods in which to experiment with party and electoral politics. If they decide to engage in political society directly – for example by forming parties, contesting in elections or endorsing candidates – they often are at first hesitant and experimental. They generally take such steps only after having long engaged in protests, lobbying or other forms of mobilization and having concluded either that these approaches have had limited effect or that opportunities exist to scale them up into formal politics. Whatever the ultimate motivation, the seepage from civil to political

society is generally slow and incremental. In Aceh, the political opportunity structure was turned on its head almost overnight. With the 2005 Helsinki peace process, a movement that had over almost three decades an unflinchingly hostile attitude toward the Indonesian state was now able, even encouraged, to contest for state power. Cherished tenets of movement ideology were rendered obsolete all at once, and movement leaders scrambled to reframe their goals.

The transition was also challenging because of the scale of transformation it required in two specific dimensions: movement goals and movement strategy. GAM supporters had to give up their long-cherished goal of complete independence and accept a much less clear vision of extended autonomy within Indonesia. Rather than aiming for a complete break, movement leaders now had to adapt to a situation in which they would be perpetually negotiating and bargaining with the central government about the proper delineation of Aceh's authority. In this respect, the disruption experienced by GAM was an extreme version of that experienced by many social movements which unite around utopian or maximalist goals, and which are forced to abandon or moderate those goals as they move into the arena of pragmatism, partial reform and compromise that is political society. Accusations of betrayal and of co-optation of movement leaders by the government are commonplace when social movements move into the formal political process. It is thus not surprising that in Aceh, too, there have been plenty of such accusations, although they have been contained somewhat by the rigid culture of military discipline that characterized the movement. This element of discipline points to the second aspect of GAM's transformation: the transformation from guerrilla fighters to political activists. GAM fighters were habituated to violent struggle and were trained in a movement where proving one's leadership credentials involved displaying qualities of physical endurance and bravery in the guerrilla war. As with many comparable processes of 'reintegration' of former guerrilla fighters into civilian life (Berdal and Ucko 2009), GAM members not only had to abandon the role that had previously won them considerable social prestige but most also lacked the educational qualifications, administrative skills or personal dispositions to succeed as party leaders and politicians.

Not surprisingly, therefore, although the transition from social to political movement in Aceh is well underway, it is still far from complete. It has been a difficult transition for many movement supporters, as they have had to learn new skills, adapt their ideology and adjust their goals. Perhaps inevitably, dissension has broken out within both the leadership and the ranks. Acehnese ethnonationalism is still not embodied only in Partai Aceh or even within the wider sphere of political society. As in the past, it has much wider appeal, and it remains an all-encompassing mode of social life for many Acehnese, providing them with a world view that roots them in Acehnese history and tradition, and with comforting and often supportive networks of social relations. In the villages where GAM was once strong, bonds between former combatants and movement adherents remain powerful, even if not all such people have learned how to turn these networks into political or social capital in the new dispensation. Many of these movement loyalists, even while they mostly endorse the coming of peace, feel alienated by their

movement's transformation into a political party and its integration into local government, complete with all the mundane compromises and corruption that comes with official politics in a patronage society like Indonesia.

For all this, Acehnese nationalism has recorded great successes in the transformation from social rebellion to political movement. Since 2005, a remarkable reframing of movement goals has taken place, even though it is not complete. Guerrilla fighters have disarmed and tried to learn the skills they need to engage in peaceful political competition, even though many have struggled to adapt. Violence and armed struggle has given way to electioneering and parliamentary meetings, even though occasional outbreaks of small-scale violence still occur. Movement leaders have shifted from exile or the jungle into government offices, even if many have done so in ways that have involved patronage and graft. Despite the strife and disillusionment these changes have left in their wake, the scale of the transformation has been extraordinary.

Notes

1 For a discussion of this discourse in student movements across Asia, see Weiss and Aspinall (in press).
2 The fullest statement of Hasan Tiro's nationalist vision can be found in Tiro (1984). For an analysis see Aspinall (2009b: 49–83).
3 Of course Aceh was not the only province to experience separatist movements and violent counter-insurgency responses. In the New Order years, in both East Timor and Irian Jaya (later renamed Papua) there were sustained independence movements. The first of these two provinces eventually gained its independence; pro-independence sentiment remains very strong in Papua.
4 Analyses of these elections can be found in International Crisis Group (2007), Clark and Palmer (2008, 2010) and Barter (2011).
5 On several points, GAM leaders argued that elements of the MoU had not been distilled in the Law for the Governing of Aceh (LoGA) which was passed by Indonesia's national parliament in 2006 to give the peace deal legal force. For instance, the law did not require national legislation affecting Aceh to be approved by the Acehnese legislature (as suggested by Article 1.1.2.c.of the MoU) and instead stated that the national government could overrule local regulations that conflicted with the public interest or with national laws and regulations (Article 235(2) of the LoGA). At the same time, many of the provisions of the law itself could not be implemented until national-level implementing regulations had been negotiated and enacted in Jakarta; most were still pending in 2011, five years after the law was passed. Without these regulations many key provisions of the law (on authority over oil and gas resources in Aceh, for example) could not be implemented. As one provincial official put it, the LoGA provided only the 'the skin' of special autonomy, the implementing regulations would produce the 'contents' (Interview with Head of the Regional Autonomy Section, 6 December 2010).
6 The background to this conflict was very complex. In late 2010, Indonesia's Constitutional Court ruled invalid Article 256 of the LoGA. This article determined that independent candidates – candidates not nominated by any political party – would be allowed to stand only in the first local elections after the passage of the law (i.e. 2006). The article was inserted into the law to enable participation in the 2006 election by GAM supporters at a time when regulations allowing local political parties did not yet exist. Over subsequent years, however, two things changed: first, the Constitutional Court ruled that similar rules disallowing independent candidates throughout Indonesia were unlawful and, second, local political parties were established in Aceh, with Partai Aceh winning a near-majority

in the provincial legislature in 2009. The Constitutional Court ruling was significant because it meant that Irwandi Yusuf would be able to run for election as an independent, as he had in 2006. Partai Aceh, meanwhile, chose Zaini Abdullah as its gubernatorial candidate. However, Partai Aceh, and the provincial parliament which it dominated, also refused to accept the Constitutional Court decision. Partai Aceh leaders said that the Court had failed to consult Aceh's legislature before making its ruling, contravening article 269(3) of the law which requires consultation when there are 'plans to change this law' This prompted them to pass the regulation disallowing independent candidates which led to the bitter conflict of late 2011.

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4 Philippine contention in the democratic 'transitions'

Vincent Boudreau

Following the 1986 Philippine People Power revolution, President Corazon Aquino released several prominent political prisoners: Jose Maria Sison, the head of the Communist Party, was among them, as were other figures central in the CCP-sponsored National Democratic Front. Among the group was the unassuming and quiet man credited with founding the New People's Army – Bernabe Buscayno, better known as Ka (comrade) Dante (Kerkvliet and Mojares 1991; Weekley 2001). It was in some ways a rarefied moment, and one that Philippine politics has never captured since: flushed with victory and in the thrall of an ebullient revolutionary rhetoric, a new president from one of the most politically and socially established clans in the Philippines released men dedicated to the eradication not just of a dictatorship, but of an elite social and political system that produced the Aquino family's power and wealth.

There was much discussion about Ka Dante's release. A popular story at the time (perhaps apocryphal) recounted that when Dante had shared a prison cell with Aquino's slain husband, Ninoy, they pledged to take care of one another's families should one of them be killed.[1] Aquino's assassination, of course, triggered the final anti-Marcos push, but possibly also activated Ka Dante's vow. Corazon Aquino, many argued, released Dante in part because of that bond – and he spent the rest of his political life taking care not to threaten and sometimes to defend her. It was the kind of story that does well in a culture that has a special regard for personal bonds and loyalty. The story also helped ease for many a kind of puzzlement at how ostensibly revolutionary leaders could come from established families, let alone embrace a reform agenda that seemed to set its sights on both political and social inequality. It made little sense that this embrace would be long or passionate. But the story of Ninoy and Dante seemed to make other unlikely love stories possible, such as that between the elite president and the people, many of them deeply impoverished, who had struggled to change their country.

It was not long, of course, before the story of elite-brokered revolutionary change crumbled. By early 1987, peace talks between the government and the Communist Party's armed New People's Army (NPA) broke down. The President then endorsed the same kind of vigilante violence to defend her regime that she had decried as an anti-Marcos candidate. The opportunity for decisive presidential action on issues like land and labour reform expired, and initiative passed to the

tender mercies of a newly elected legislature. Many activist groups moved from a critical support for Aquino, and for her 1987 constitution, to some version of rejection or opposition (Abinales 1996). By the time Anderson (1998) dubbed the new government 'Cacique Democracy', the term resonated with many in the Philippines. But the loss of elite patronage for a Philippine social revolution was the predictable end of a story that never had much chance of unfolding in the real world.

Why the story was (even momentarily) plausible, and what has happened to Philippine activism in an age of diminished revolutionary expectations has everything to do with several special features of Philippine social movements, including their peculiar relationship to elite political forces and mainstream institutions. In two important ways – or rather, in the particular combination of two factors individually present elsewhere in Southeast Asia – Philippine activism is unique. The first is deeply historical, involving political structures that emerged from colonialism and influenced both the Marcos regime and the movements that opposed it. Briefly, the peculiar circumstances of Philippine independence pre-empted the need for a mass mobilizing political process and allowed elites to make early efforts to prevent and demobilize mass politics. Political conflict was fundamentally an intra-elite affair up to and including the conflict that led to martial law and the anti-Marcos struggle (Corpuz 1989; McCoy 1999). Second, and despite the absence of a strong historically-established communist tradition, a robust communist insurgency and a vibrant complex of movement organizations emerged that was unparalleled in Southeast Asia outside Indo-China (Chapman 1987; Jones 1989; Weekley 2001). That these movement organizations with all their attendant formations (insurgent armies, labour union, non-governmental organizations and protest organizations) emerged *under* martial law rather than before it strongly shaped the popular struggle.

Despite the key explanatory role I assign these historical factors, the bulk of this chapter focuses on the years that followed the events of 1986. Over the 25 years since the dictatorship, social movement organizations have persisted but activism has changed dramatically. Some of those changes reflect deep influences to which I have already referred; some reflect the impact of the democracy movement and the political structures that emerged following the removal of Marcos. But inevitably, subsequent struggles – large and small – have changed how Philippine activism operates and what it can likely achieve. Fundamentally, this chapter argues that the democratic transition, often conceived as a movement in its own right, marks a critical juncture in the life of a nation's contentious political traditions. Some movements that participated in the democratic transition were, rightly conceived, democracy movements – but many had deeper and more established commitments to other goals including the seizure of state power, or a more socialist redistributive policy agenda. The analysis of Philippine activism therefore requires a discussion of how established movements, with established social and political concerns, passed through a period of democracy struggle and regime transition and in what shape they emerged from that period, and how they have engaged the post-transition dispensation.

Democratization movements, or democratization *and* movements?

Democracy movements have often been conceptualized as struggles limited to efforts to open up autocratic political systems – but this is only sometimes accurate. Early transitions, in what Huntington (1991) called the 'third wave', mainly unseated dictators who had survived atop more or less narrow social bases because of strong external support (Boudreau 2007). In such contexts, the democracy movement could be conceived in terms of a broad coalition demanding participatory rights on behalf of whole societies. Even then (and certainly in the post-conflict transitions that have taken place since then) democracy remains an exceptionally limited foundation for political unities, with a short shelf life once the dictatorship's most egregious violations of democratic process end. In the shadow of authoritarian rule, the right to free expression or assembly may seem luminous and sufficient. But procedural questions soon give way to substantive matters, and populations move from expectations that democracy will produce material benefits to more direct demands for those benefits. Pro-democracy coalitions then divide into blocs concerned with the *content* of politics. Distributional conflicts may enflame communal tensions (Manning 2004), as policy disagreements on tax policy, social spending or the protection of labour rights create new coalitions and undermine old ones.

In the Philippines, what many took to be a movement for democracy can more usefully be conceived as a specific period in a longer pattern of contention that both predated and survived the transition. Much pre-1986 activism made claims regarding the deeper structures of inequality and repression, sought to seize state power, or secede from the Philippine republic. Demands for fair labour practices, agrarian reform and more robust protection of human rights proliferated under the Marcos dictatorship, but were not merely elements of a democratization programme. They were part of multi-faceted programmes developed by movement organizations with ambitions to take power and implement a reform or revolutionary agenda (Wurfel 1988; Thompson 1995). The distinction is more than merely semantic: a movement that grows up during a regime crisis, entirely focused on the goal of democracy, differs sharply from movements with long histories of multi-faceted struggle that have entered and engaged a democratization period. For the latter, democracy struggles mobilize new activists, change structures of power and alliance, and often compel a reframing of some core claims – but work their influence upon pre-existing movement networks, orientations and relationships. Movements such as those in the Philippines should be conceived as navigating a set of particular political conditions – the regime crisis – rather than being a product of those conditions.

The term 'democracy movement' is misleading for another reason. The idea of democracy as an automatically stable resting place, the pursuit of which easily unites activists, is a thin fiction. To be sure, 'democracy as end-zone', as a system that will provide an institutional arena that pacifies conflict, is a fairly common theme that animates literatures on the democratic peace and democratization more

generally (Doyle 1983; Oneal and Russett 1997; MacMillan 2003). But the faith in consolidated democracy as panacea was always overblown. Democracy at best balances and domesticates particularistic, arbitrary and sequestering inclinations, but never banishes them entirely. Democratization often stalls precisely when efforts to develop formal participatory and deliberative rules give way to processes that use those rules to make policy and select leaders. The system strains, and sometimes breaks, under the contrarian impulses of those unwilling to entrust their ambitions or interests to democratic procedures (Fatton 1999; Snyder 2000).

Nor, of course, do democratic processes resolve conflict among different aspirants to political office. Even among reformers and civil society activists, agreement on general reform positions does not always lead to agreement on who should play leading roles. Electoral competition can rupture principled advocacy alliances, or at least make advocacy seem merely a resource in somebody's quest for power. As these arguments emerge, the key questions cease to involve what the system will be and start to address what it will do, for whom and under whose leadership. Actors of all sorts learn how the institutions work, where they can be stretched and where the surest roads to power lie. These developments reveal patterns of politics that, while channelled into institutions of democracy and democratization, are not defined by them.

Two important questions weigh heavily on activists in a democratic transition: who will hold power and by what procedures will they rule? The 'democracy as panacea' mythology assumes that activists throw themselves into the procedural questions but leave the selection of rulers to the newly established process. But in practice this is unlikely. More probably, activists' own political interests strongly influence their engagement of the process. It follows that the more feasible the separation of procedural questions and issues of interest and positioning, the more possible it will be to achieve a smooth transition to democracy. The most tumultuous transitions take place where system design and political competition take place simultaneously, for example in post-conflict societies where policy makers pursue democratization as a way to resolve conflict. Less tumultuous transitions keep system design and political competition separate in some ways and for some time. For example, uprisings against corrupt or patrimonial dictators may focus on who should rule without immediately opening the complicated *how* questions. Conversely, broadly inclusive mobilizations for democracy may allow people to concentrate on system design and hope that establishing procedural fairness will soothe subsequent distributional disagreements. In such examples, the new system may advantage politically ascendant factions or classes but the design *process* may go more smoothly, at least through the transition. At some point, however, it is inevitable that the new system will need to be tested against particularistic assertions – including the assertions of activists and movements who helped put the new system in place.

Philippine activism under Marcos

The 1986 Philippine democracy uprising drew on movements with long histories of both struggle and competition with one another. Over the course of the Marcos

regime, the different branches of the anti-Marcos movement explored unity in action projects; just as often, however, competition and rivalries disrupted those coalition efforts (Thompson 1995; Reid 2000). Activists approached the 1986 elections and the protests that followed with one eye on Marcos and his military and the other on one another. But the overwhelming fact of popular uprising – of the massive activation of formerly un-mobilized citizens, of Corazon Aquino's powerfully evocative appeal, of mobilized church and business groups and the key defection of Marcos allies – did a great deal to set those movement rivalries aside.[2] New and moderate regime critics described themselves as revolutionaries. Local branches of the national democratic movement (the broad movement led by the Communist Party of the Philippines) defied their leaders to participate in both the elections and the protests. Hence, despite an established movement tradition and substantial sectarian rivalries, an apparently strong pro-democracy alliance with an expansive mandate to reform government procedures as well as the deeper structures of power in society emerged on the heels of Marcos's departure from Manila.

To understand what happened subsequently, we need to consider patterns of contention established under the long years of Marcos rule. Two kinds of Southeast Asian communist parties existed in the early 1960s. The more common kind was founded in anti-colonial struggle and had fairly strong mass followings. Many – the Indonesian, Burmese and Vietnamese parties, to be sure – figured strongly in the founding of their national armies, and had real standing in core national politics (despite rivalries and conflict with other central actors). An entirely different kind of communist party emerged where mass struggle was not an essential part of the independence process. Thai, Filipino and (for different reasons) Malayan communist parties were less centrally positioned in the process of achieving independence. In the Philippines and Thailand, communism was initially unconnected with mass associations or key national institutions.[3] In Malaya, communism rested on bases in Chinese communities and was directed, for its ideological inspiration, toward the PRC. For both reasons, communism in all three countries floated apart from the structures and organizations of governance, and from the core social networks that mobilized mass society. While in their expansion, communist movements would connect to or cultivate mass social formations, they were never clearly anchored to them.

A second distinctive feature of the Philippine situation was the structure of elite rivalry. Marcos, as has by now been well documented, represented a new faction of the elite, less tied to landed wealth or oligarchic norms. His populist rhetoric, early reforms and efforts to position landed elites as a backward-looking drain on progressive energies, were rooted in that rivalry, as were his early attacks on some of the most established Philippine families (Hawes 1992; Constantino and Constantino 1998). From the outset, therefore, established elite families with no real chance of radicalization were thrust to the margins of the New Society, expropriated, stripped of political power and, in many cases, jailed. These elites were from a very early stage in martial law available to movement activists as supporting allies. They challenged martial law's constitutionality, mounting a surprisingly

substantial campaign against early referenda intended to legitimize the new order. They founded organizations to protect civil liberties and human rights and allowed these organizations to defend the broadest spectrum of activists, including those in the Communist Party.

Taken together, these two factors help explain a good deal of how political contention unfolded under Marcos. Activists floated between a mass society to which they were still forging connections and a set of unusually available elite allies. The relative newness of communist (and indeed, any tradition of class-based) mainstream politics meant that, despite some of Marcos's early explanations for martial law as being necessary to turn back radicalism from the left and from the right, that radicalism was not formidable enough to threaten core elite interests. In light of this initially pale communist spectre, dissident organizations were allowed access to the protective cover of key social institutions – the church, the legal establishment, universities and, eventually, business associations. Naturally, as elite-backed movement organizations grew, elites embraced radical rhetoric, identifying themselves as revolutionaries (Thompson 1995). Here the defining features of contention under Marcos begin to emerge: first, a broadly radical idiom of resistance that in some of its most important formations was backed by deeply conservative social forces; second, a deeply committed activist cadre (soon representing the full left flank of the ideological spectrum) that needed to strengthen ties with new mass formations.

Interactions between this activist world and the regime contributed to the expansion of the activist machinery. Marcos proceeded as if his New Society movement had a strong and natural constituency, and tried repeatedly to develop a popular mandate through elections and the periodic easing of authoritarian controls. Activists greeted each opening with anti-regime mobilization, and the regime responded with repression. Cycles of liberalization, mobilization and repression – combined with substantial elite and institutional support – gave activists strong and expanding organizations. Parties organized for elections were driven underground by repression, only to be supported by Church and business groups. Movement organizations proliferated, expanded and differentiated themselves from one another. Activists often broke with one another, but these disputes typically generated entirely new movement networks, rather than demobilizing pressures.

By 1986, the anti-Marcos resistance involved a spectrum of functional organizations from parties to mass organizations to sectoral groups and armed formations.[4] Farmers' organizations, workers' organizations, student groups and organizations representing women and ethnic minorities connected movement leaderships to mass society. Within such groups, organizers and activists developed demands for deep structural change. Mass formations mainly responded to specific sectoral issues that affected them directly. Farmers, for instance, pushed strongly for new forms of agrarian relations, but had perhaps only a passing familiarity with labour rights. In short, approaching the regime crisis and pro-democracy mobilization, vast sections of the movement saw democratization as creating a new, more favourable arena for their particularistic concerns, rather than as a defining goal in itself.

Activism after the transition

Marcos was removed after a post-election protest wave led to the defection of key Marcos allies to the opposition and a dramatic five-day stand off on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA). Huge numbers of formally unorganized participants joined the demonstrations, leading many observers to mistakenly describe the People Power uprising as spontaneous. In fact, like most struggles of this kind, the EDSA events combined efforts by organized forces and an upsurge of unorganized participation, galvanized by new and prominent elite defections from the regime. But organized forces, which could call forth demonstrations by command and maintained close relations with their mass bases, drove much of the activity and would re-emerge as a central element of Philippine activism when mass activity began to ebb.

In early 1986, Corazon Aquino became president, declared a revolutionary government and dismissed local officials, appointing a vast army of Officers in Charge from the level of provincial governor down. Soon after, she created the Presidential Commission on Good Governance (PCGG) to track down Marcos's ill-gotten wealth, organized a constitutional commission and began to plan for elections. Throughout that first year, she also regularly presided over rallies – prayer rallies, rallies in defence of government, rallies to counter rumours that Marcos might return – rallies that all re-enacted and renewed that pro-democracy struggle.

All of this brings us back to the release of Ka Dante, Joma Sison, and the rest – and to similar signs of close relations between the new government and the various activist networks. Aquino's first government was called a revolutionary government (not transitional, provisional or democratic). Activists like Jimmy Tadeo and Lina Broka (both associated with the National Democratic Front) sat on the Constitutional Commission, and there were several so-called 'left leaning' cabinet officials in that first government. In early speeches, Aquino pledged to act on long-held movement demands, like reforming agrarian and labour relations and eliminating US military bases. Apparently earnest peace negotiations occurred between the government and the Communist Party. Each such event suggested a seemingly substantial degree of movement influence on and support for the new administration.

Two things should be clear, however. First, the early posturing of a fairly conservative elite as revolutionaries was largely untenable, as became increasingly obvious as 1986 turned into 1987 (Anderson 1988). By then President Aquino had referred to anti-communist murders and vigilante groups as a spontaneous expression of People Power, had deferred decisions on land and labour reform to the incoming congress and had vowed to unsheathe the sword of war against the insurgencies. Second, and more important for the present discussion, the EDSA rebellion itself created a compelling climate for cooperation among activists, politicians and citizens. In private, movement activists expressed decided scepticism regarding the government's democratic or reformist intentions – and deep mistrust of activists with ideological positions other than their own. But all initially felt compelled to rally around the government.

By 1987, however, politics had shifted from an effort to collaborate on the design of democratic processes to efforts to use those processes to influence the allocation of resources. This did not mean that movements demobilized – but rather, that political dynamics animating activism were drawn into, and began to mirror, more dominant political norms and practices. The ideologically informed advocacy of the 1980s and early 1990s gave way to a political particularism, seeking selective benefits to specific constituencies. Activists still took principled positions, in favour of labour rights, land reform and anti-corruption measures. But patterns of group mobilization began to reflect alliances between movement groups and politicians, with activists refraining from criticizing politicians with whom they were allied. Indeed, as we will see, the large anti-regime mobilizations that followed 1986 – the so called EDSA2 and EDSA3 uprisings – are intelligible not as unified popular uprisings against government excess, but as episodes of contention that involved discrete activist flanks in larger political conflicts crafted by political parties, established political families, elected or opposition politicians, representative government institutions and the military.

To understand these changes, we need to consider the following dynamics and how they interacted to produce a less universal activism: (1) a shift in the character of movement advocacy; (2) a change in the character of movement participation in electoral politics; and (3) a process of mobilization that deeply changed relations between mass society, political parties and social movement organizations.[5] Triggered by deep changes in communication and information technology, the rise of a more independent mass society required politicians to make new efforts to develop their bases, efforts that led them to stronger alliances with what became more domesticated social movement organizations.

Political reform and the politics of access

In 1986, activists differed most sharply with one another over what they called their political line – how they viewed the regime and what the most effective path to victory would be. Far greater areas of agreement existed on specific policy programmes (Kerkvleit 1996). After the transition, as many immediate political obstacles to unity in action eased, broad coalitions pushing specific reform programmes became more possible. In the next several years, the broadest activist coalitions in Philippine history formed around different sectoral reform agendas. The biggest by far was the Coalition for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), but others included coalitions on labour, on fisheries reform, on human rights and the status of women (Magadia 1999). Each developed legislative positions, identified legislative allies, lobbied and demonstrated, all with a view to passing sweeping reform. The perspective on politics represented in these efforts tended still toward the universalism also evident in procedural reforms: good laws, properly designed and implemented, could improve lives for all Filipinos. Movements leading the reform effort hoped to get political credit for their work, but did not seek preferential access to resources that emerged from the reforms themselves.

From 1988 through the early 1990s, large reform efforts consumed a great deal of movement activity. By 1992, movement coalitions had passed or would soon pass landmark legislation covering most of the big topics and work shifted to matters of implementation. Substantial optimism existed about the transformative potential of strong movement and civil society involvement in that process (Eaton 2003; Velasco 2007).[6] Still, activists faced new questions that bore the seeds of new conflict: who would be the first land reform beneficiaries? What movement groups would be represented on implementing agencies or receive resources attached to those agencies? Who would be tapped to work as government officials and how would those positions influence movement access or power? As more movement leaders moved into government service, suspicion grew that both state attention to particular complaints – and movement pressure on specific government agencies – reflected their sectarian divisions. In this way, sectarianism and particularism began deeply to infect the formerly more unified politics of broad social and political reform.

Electoral domestication and disaggregation

When elections first took place, movement activists differed on how to engage them. In the 1987 senate and congressional elections, movement efforts ranged from endorsing candidates that adopted pro-people positions to conducting voter education drives. With one exception, movement groups did not themselves form political parties. But by 1992 – the first post-Marcos presidential election – movement organizations were more deeply involved in the elections. The coalition AKBAYAN, which has since become a political party in its own right, formed to support the candidacy of Jovito Salonga, the most left-leaning candidate in a field that included Imelda Marcos. Importantly, the candidates in that election occupied a left–right spectrum and movements largely endorsed and campaigned in ways that were ideologically intelligible. Ultimately, however, movement-supported candidates were trounced.

Things had changed by the 1998 elections. In the aftermath of the 1992 defeat, movement leaders began to argue that the 'new politics' – by which they meant principled politics based on issues and ideas – had failed, and they called on activists to learn and practice the tricks of established electoral politics. By Election Day, all candidates had formed some alliance with some 'left' group – and with the left now everywhere, ideology no longer distinguished one campaign from another. Movement groups weighed up the access and influence they would have with different candidates, and formed alliances behind a kind of market niche strategy, often discovering that their influence would be strongest among candidates with the least activist support. In many ways, this election represented the end of ideology for Philippine elections (Boudreau 2009).

Moreover, the newly-introduced party list system, a fairly unique feature of Philippine democracy, provided a new and separate arena in which small activist parties competed for 50 at-large congressional seats (Brownlee 2008; Ufen 2008). While the system placed electoral office in reach for activists, it also

disaggregated activist electoral activity in two ways. First, explicit prohibitions on parties running in both the party list arena and in other contests meant that activists never took up the challenge of developing an issue- or class-based political party to compete against the major parties. Movements backed off that effort after one early attempt – the Party of the Nation (*Partido ng Bayan*) – failed to elect any of the candidates it sponsored in 1987. Second, within the party list arena, activists competed with one another for seats. In that competition, sectarian trends intensified both because of the competition itself and because winning candidates would control discretionary resources and could direct others toward the particular needs of specific movement constituencies (Quimpo 2005).

But the system did not merely push activism away from the dominant arenas and into competition with one another. It also helped cement a new kind of electoral relationship between traditional politicians and activists. Presidential candidates' main assets rest in their individual appeal and material resources – but they campaign on tickets composed of people with star power (often athletes and show business personalities) and local candidates capable of delivering votes. Local candidates, as well as activist-led party list campaigns, often receive endorsements and material support from national campaigns in exchange for delivering blocs of local votes. Many such alliances even cross party lines. Myriad forms of patronage flow along these electoral alliances – positions on electoral caravans, placement on printed sample ballots, money for logistical support and vote buying, access to men and women to guard poll results – all crucial to a campaign's success.

Together, the sectarian competition among different activist groups and patronage links between activist candidates and traditional politicians meant that electoral engagement created debts and alliances totally unrelated to movement positions on reform. And, when such electoral efforts succeeded, they created situations in which movements often refrained from challenging those they might otherwise have attacked (Quimpo 2007).

Populist politics and divided social movements

One of the verities of Philippine electoral politics has been that mass electoral participation is controlled through vote buying, brokerage (when things go right) and violence (when they do not). Mass society plays a mediated (rather than direct) role in elections and voting: to understand who wins where, one should look beyond voter preferences to systems of coercion, fraud and patronage. This perspective was dealt a shock with the election of the popular film star, Joseph Estrada, to the senate, the vice presidency and then the presidency. This is not to say that patronage, vote buying and cheating were not still important in Philippine politics, but a new dynamic had emerged. Mass voters had a candidate (first in Estrada, and subsequently, his good friend and fellow film star, Fernando Poe Junior) that they viewed as their own, and whom they would defend.

Estrada's presidency would not have happened without largely unmediated mass support, and without the work put in by a broad spectrum of activists who saw in Estrada a figure who could energize working and poor people (Velasco

2007; Thompson 2010). But, in the new pattern of movement engagement with elections, activist and civil society groups that backed other candidates felt shut out of power. Many of these groups had enjoyed privileged access to the Ramos administration, and their change in fortunes was stark. They were, therefore, available for mobilization against Estrada. The results of these increasingly stable macro alliances were the two most prominent uprisings of the new century: EDSA2 and EDSA3.

This is no place to review the details of EDSA2 and EDSA3 – the subject is far too complicated. In terms of bare facts, some social movement organizations, working with the support of a section of the military and many opposition politicians, mobilized in a well bankrolled set of anti-Estrada demonstrations, culminating in a massed demonstration at EDSA (Reid 2001). After days on the street, buoyed by musicians playing on well turned out stages, a military ultimatum reinforced the demonstration demands, and Estrada resigned. The day after he left office, the front page of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* carried a cartoon with the caption, 'It's so wonderful to be Filipino once again.' However, not everyone was celebrating. Movement groups that supported the Estrada administration made some show of supporting him, and poor people, particularly across Manila's slum communities, began to simmer. After Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had taken office and brought Estrada to trial, sporadic expressions of mass discontent coalesced in another Pro-Estrada EDSA uprising, the so called EDSA3 – the only of the EDSA uprisings, it should be noted, to end in bloodshed.

The polarized nature of the support for these different movements is evident in divergent approaches taken by the media toward them. In contrast to their coverage of EDSA2, all of Manila's major news outlets initially refused to cover the EDSA3 demonstrations. For days, the only indication in the media that anything was happening came in broadcasts from the television station run by *Inglesio Ni Kristo* (Church of Christ), a local religious order. Middle- and upper-class Manila residents described learning about the protests because their maids and drivers were disappearing each night to join the encampment. When the more established print and broadcast media did begin to cover the protests, they typically described them as dangerous, dirty and morally suspect – emphasizing the smell of human excrement at the encampment and speculating about participant drug use. Activists in the demonstrations followed these reports with growing resentment and anger (Hutchison 2007).

Behind the class divide, however, lay divided activist sympathies in more established movement organizations. A broad section of the movement, many with roots in social democratic organizations – from which appointees to the Macapagal-Arroyo administration were drawn – strongly backed EDSA2 and benefited from it in immediate material terms. Perhaps the most prominent such benefit came with the allocation of proceeds from the government sale of so-called 'PEACe Bonds' (The Poverty Eradication and Alleviation Certificates Bonds), a sale that in effect permanently endowed non-governmental organizations affiliated with the social democratic movement.[7] The Estrada side of the political divide involved other activist groups, including many to the left of the social

democrats – although, not surprisingly, ideology was no longer an accurate guide to who would align with what camp. While movement support for EDSA2 was represented as coming from across civil society and social movement formations, in fact those formations were increasingly defined by their alliances with different factions of the political elite.

The activist alignments emerging in the Philippines resemble those that have emerged in Thailand: one faction of the movement, supporting the idea of democracy as good governance (transparency, accountability, low levels of corruption), faced off against another, supporting an idea of democracy as fidelity to an electoral mandate and the empowerment of new, populist forces (Phongpaichit and Baker 2008; Pye and Schaffar 2008). In Thailand, this populist support has backed various pro-Thaksin forces (see Brown and Sakdina, this volume). In the Philippines, they backed Estrada, the EDSA3 rebellion, and then the presidential candidacy of Fernando Poe Junior. In both countries, the good governance faction of the movement was overwhelmingly more urban, more affluent and more closely tied – both in worldview and organizationally – to global norms of procedural liberalism. They also enjoy a more consistently close relationship to government. As indicated above, in the Philippines many from this group formed the core of Macapagal-Arroyo's cabinet – especially holding positions with responsibility for social or developmental policy. Many resigned *en masse* when Arroyo's electoral corruption came to light, helping lead the so-called Black and White campaign demanding her resignation. In the elections that followed the end of Macapagal-Arroyo's term, they endorsed and worked to advance the candidacy of Ninoy Aquino, and went on to hold prominent positions in his government as well.

Caveats and conclusions

The foregoing discussion lays out the main structural changes in Philippine activism, but does not capture many of the important details. Underneath the overarching polarization among different activist networks, and their alignment with elected political interests, some activists are working in different styles. A generation of the movement work on issues like the national debt, human rights and the status of women produced organizations with very focused advocacy programmes. Increasingly such groups use multiple approaches, assembling research and advocacy papers but also conducting mass education and protest campaigns. But for many, protest and campaign work is an element of a broadened repertoire of political tools, and they often resemble interest groups in more strongly pluralist societies. Such groups are typically not as committed to the macro-political alliances that structured the EDSA2 and EDSA3 struggles – though they often express opinions on these fights and participate in protests. But such organizations largely focus on bounded sets of issues, and these issues shape their involvement in other modes of politics. In these groups, moreover, protest and demonstrations for campaign work typically requires the cultivation and maintenance of mass constituencies even when overall levels of protest mobilization are not high. The

organizational costs of keeping a readily mobilizable force at hand are substantial, and so protests associated with these campaigns have grown smaller, and are often episodic and theatrical.

More than previously, such organizations professionalize activism. Full-time activists are often employed by non-governmental organizations, and this may strain organizational resources. It has become harder to raise funds for salaries and organizational expenses as the gleam on Philippine democracy tarnished and international donor attention shifted to places like Eastern Europe, Afghanistan and Iraq. Many groups now pursue research projects and programmes that promise revenue but may not directly advance their agenda. Others have found new wind for their sails working in international coalitions and on international campaigns. For example, the Freedom from Debt Coalition is formally independent from the globally driven Jubilee South network – but close cooperation between the organizations sustains both.[8]

Generational effects also matter. The activists that cut their teeth on regime change and revolutionary struggle are coming into a time in their careers when they naturally think about securing their own futures, or deploying their skills on a broader playing field. Successive periods of popular mobilization, regime transition and political disappointment, moreover, have undercut the revolutionary dream. Many have consequently sought out other arenas of activity. In international organizations and global civil society networks, the movement-crafted strong organizational skills and command of English put Filipino activists in great demand. While international work may draw away Filipino talent, stronger cross-regional collaboration has also been an area of growing strength in Philippine activism. Still, young people do not now join the movement in numbers sufficient to replace the drain.

Finally, CPP/NPA (The Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army) and various Islamist insurgencies in the southern islands persist. But the communist insurgency has, with every passing year, grown less and less connected to the main currents of Philippine activism. Muslim insurgencies, of course, respond to a different set of opportunities and influences: the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the spread of Islamist networks in Southeast Asia, and some collaboration between Indonesian and Philippine Islamist groups have helped sustain and expand the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf insurgencies. But like the CCP/NPA, these insurgent groups are frequently absent from the reform-driven Manila activist discourse.

To sum up, something in this new activist configuration is old and something decidedly new. What is old – older than Marcos even – is a structure of political alignments that are fluid and less ideological than power-seeking. Movement organizations have undergone a kind of institutionalization decidedly different from the conversion of mobilized protest collectives into interest groups common in many Western nations. Rather, movements, maintaining to some degree their mass organizations and capacity for protest, have increasingly worked closely with established political factions, both in government and in the opposition. As factionalized and particularistic trends in Philippine politics take deeper root, they

pull at the patterns and structures of Philippine contention, domesticating activism and linking it more strongly to mainstream modes of political competition. The founding myth that the current regime rests on an activist legacy certainly helps this process (Teehankee 2011). Governments, policy and elections all draw in activist idioms, and virtually all politicians claim some activist history. Indeed, in the combination of rhetorical radicalism and exceptionally conservative politics among key sections of Philippine elites, perhaps not much has changed since the days when Ninoy and Ka Dante shared a cell.

What is new, however, is a set of mechanisms by which poor people can now participate in unmediated ways in (especially) electoral politics. The impact of these new mechanisms still remains unclear, but evolving electoral dynamics will likely usher in new forms of protest and advocacy. One thing seems clear: as a mobilization process draws in individuals who do not regard democracy as good governance, conflict may more often occur not between a popular movement and governing elites but among different networks containing parties and political officials, factions of the military, activist organizations and mass organizations. Cleavages among activist traditions, always some factor in anti-Marcos contention, are becoming dominant in Philippine activist politics. As individuals with movement ties but government careers gain more power and responsibility, those cleavages should grow more consequential.

Notes

1 I have never seen this story in any written account of the politics of the time, but I made note of it several times in field notes I took during my dissertation research, conducted between October 1986 and November 1988.
2 The EDSA leadership had a strong interest in portraying the demonstrations as a spontaneous human – even divine – act of resistance, rather than an orchestrated movement activity. For an analysis of the general appeal of narratives of spontaneity, see Polletta (1998). For a discussion of the discourse of religiosity in Philippine protest, see Bautista (2006).
3 I refer here to the Communist Party of the Philippines. The earlier Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (The communist party from which the CPP split in the late 1960s) was involved in anti-Japanese guerrilla warfare during World War II, and provided the ideological leadership for the HUK rebellion in the early 1950s. By the time Marcos came to power, they had been marginalized for more than a decade, and even in their heyday, were not, in the sense I am using it here, central to the nationalist coalition that shepherded the Philippines through the independence process.
4 For a graphic representation of this organizational structure, see Figure 1 in Boudreau (2001).
5 For a fuller discussion of changing electoral and policy dynamics in the immediate post-Marcos period, consult Boudreau (2009).
6 For a less optimistic view, see Storey (1998).
7 The debate on the PEACe Bonds was long and acrimonious. One publication by the main NGO coalition (that would hold and distribute the proceeds from the PEACe Bonds) is CODE-NGO (2001). There were many responses, but one representative one is Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) (2002). For details of FDC, see Caouette and Tadem, in this volume.
8 From field notes I took during a stint as an FDC external evaluator in 2008.

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5 Values and the institutionalization of Indonesia's organic agriculture movement

Nicola Edwards

Since Robert Michels proposed his infamous 'iron law of oligarchy' at the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars of collective activism have repeatedly claimed that initially anti-systemic social movements inevitably become formalized, hierarchical and co-opted by existing systems – in a word, they become institutionalized. According to such analyses, as social movements start to work within formal systems, they invariably compromise the fundamental values that were the initial drivers for activism, eventually leading to the demise of the movement itself. This argument is most often made in regard to trade unions, but it has also been applied to the environmental movement and, more recently, to the movement for organic agriculture.

Proponents of the institutionalization thesis claim that whereas organic activists once worked towards a 'holistic' understanding of organic agriculture, advocating the production of food and fibre in a way that enhances soil health and biodiversity, that allows animals to behave in a natural manner, and that aims to reduce the impact of human activities on the environment, organic agriculture is now a billion dollar industry regulated by 'minimalist' certification systems that define organics as simply agricultural production without the use of chemical inputs (Lockie et al. 2006: 3). This, they argue, represents the conventionalization of organic agriculture, as the movement becomes increasingly subsumed within existing systems, resulting in the loss of the radical values and practices that once underpinned it (cf. Guthman 1998; DeLind 2000; Tovey 1997).

This chapter investigates the relationship between institutionalization, deradicalization and demobilization with reference to three case studies of organizations engaged in organic farming activism in Indonesia – Serikat Petani Indonesia, VECO-Indonesia and the Bali Organic Association.[1] As the discussion that follows shows, while there is some correlation between institutionalization and conservatism in one of the cases, this is not evident in the other two. These cases indicate that deradicalization does not necessarily occur with institutionalization, and that accurate analysis of shifting social movement values requires consideration of a wider variety of indicators.

Organizational and normative institutionalization

Scholars have used the single term 'institutionalization' to refer to what can be better understood as two often discrete processes, namely 'organizational' and 'normative' institutionalization. Much of the literature refers to 'organizational institutionalization' which occurs when social movement organizations adopt the structure and methods of formal institutions, or become incorporated into existing institutions. These changes result from direct and socially acceptable interactions between social movement organizations and formal institutions, as well as transformations that occur within social movement organizations themselves as they become more formal, hierarchical or bureaucratic. The concept can be traced back to Michels' argument that the development of organizational interests is inevitable and that movement leaders will necessarily become detached from the masses and fall into the orbit of the political elite (Michels 1962: 355). By contrast, 'normative institutionalization' is said to occur when once-radical social movement goals become acceptable to mainstream society or to formal institutions (McAdam 1998; McCarthy and McPhail 1998). This process is largely external to social movement organizations, which may seek to encourage normative institutionalization, but have little direct agency in achieving it.

Although many accounts focus primarily on one or the other of these modes of institutionalization, they are by no means always discrete. Coglianese (2001: 113–4), for example, argues that in the United States of America the acceptance of environmental values by the state and among the general public has spurred a process of organizational institutionalization and, as a consequence, environmental organizations are now typically large, dependent on a professionalized and specialized workforce, and favour lobbying over grassroots mobilization – a development which he claims has undermined the movement's ability to achieve its goals. Many scholars of the organic movement have noted that it, too, is undergoing a process of institutionalization. Like Coglianese, Tovey (1997), who initiated the debate when she argued that the organic movement in Ireland was becoming subject to institutionalization, describes a situation in which normative institutionalization of a social movement concept causes it to lose some of the meaning and power it originally held within the context of the movement itself. Several scholars have subsequently argued that the normative institutionalization of the organic concept has facilitated the development of an 'organic industry', which often uses conventional agricultural methods in the production of goods that are only nominally organic (Guthman 1998; DeLind 2000). Moreover, while organic agriculture was initially closely linked to local, community-based exchange (Tovey 1997), scholars argue that the organic movement and the global organic industry are now inextricably linked (Kaltoft 1999, 2001). These arguments are part of an ongoing debate about the 'conventionalization' of organic production, which is dependent on the core theory that economic forces will eventually drive organic production to resemble mainstream agribusiness methods (cf. Guthman 2004; Hall and Mogyorody 2001; Lockie and Halpin 2005).

Like Michels (1962), then, scholars of the organic movement clearly associate institutionalization with deradicalization and a loss of movement efficacy. However, the Indonesian case suggests that the existence of commercial organic traders does not necessarily signify the organizational institutionalization of the movement. The commercialization of organic production may be an indicator of institutionalization, but in itself profit motivation is not antithetical to movement values. Many participants within the organic movement are motivated by the need to profit from their organic practice while at the same time remaining ideologically committed to the movement. Moreover, since the organic movement initially propounded the importance of small-scale, local production and distribution, the local sale of organic products through small networks can be considered indicative of a non-institutionalized movement, whereas organic production that is marketed on a larger scale may be symptomatic of institutionalization. In other words, the search for profit is only indicative of deradicalization when individuals' focus on profit contradicts the philosophical tenets of the movement.

Indonesia's organic movement

Indonesia's organic agriculture movement, which first emerged in the 1970s in response to the Green Revolution, draws heavily on Western concepts while nevertheless operating quite differently from similar movements in developed countries. Most notably, while the Indonesian movement pursues a variety of goals, activists are more often driven by livelihood concerns than the ostensibly 'post-materialist' values which many have identified as part of the counterculture and environmental movements in the West (cf. Belasco 2007; Dabbert et al. 2004).

Scholars of the 'pre-institutionalized' American and European organic agriculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s note that organic activism was inspired by an anti-capitalist philosophy and the belief that organic farming could foster a closer relationship between people and nature, and between producers and consumers (Belasco 2007; Tovey 1997). Activists argued that organic farms should operate as a holistic ecosystem, and organic practice was seen as an attempt to bring about 'a harmony between as many life kingdoms as possible' (Belasco 2007: 21). In Indonesia there are also historical linkages between the organic movement and rural and ecological activism, as the antecedents of the contemporary Indonesian environmental and agrarian movements developed at the same time as a nascent movement towards organic agriculture. In the 1970s, a Belgian priest, René Daem, began to establish small sustainable agriculture projects in Flores in response to the Green Revolution. During the same decade, Ni Lu Kartini, who later became the Director of the Bali Organic Association, began organizing informal discussion forums to promote organic methods to Balinese farmers. Then, in 1984, the first official organic agriculture training centre, the Bina Sarana Bakti Foundation, was established in West Java by Swiss pastor Agatho Elsener (Farmia 2008). Other sustainable agriculture organizations were formed in the 1990s, such as the Indonesian branch of the international Pesticide

Action Network, known as PAN-Indonesia, which commenced its promotion of organic rice and vegetable farming in 1992, and in 1996 registered as the BioTani Indonesia Foundation (BioTani Indonesia 2009; Tjahjadi 2004).

Many more organizations and initiatives have developed in the post-Suharto period. In 1998, the Indonesian Organic Network (Jaringan Kerja Pertanian Organik Indonesia, Jaker-PO) was founded as an umbrella group for NGOs, peasants' organizations and private companies, with the aim of increasing the adoption of organic agriculture on a local level (Jaker-PO 2009). The Sahani cooperative was also founded in 1998 with the aim of creating channels for the local marketing of self-certified organic rice in the Yogyakarta region (Sahani 2008). The following year the Indonesian Development of Education and Permaculture Foundation (Yayasan IDEP) was established in Bali to provide information on sustainable food production and community-based sustainable development (Yayasan IDEP 2009). Then in 2001 the Flemish Organization for Assistance in Development merged with the Belgian organization Vredeseilanden to form VECO-Indonesia, which has subsequently promoted a variety of sustainable agriculture projects in Eastern Indonesia, and more recently in Bali and Java. Another organic network, the Indonesian Organic Alliance, was officially established in 2006, and now claims to have more than sixty members (Aliansi Organis Indonesia 2007).[2]

As Peluso et al. (2008) have argued, there has been a growing confluence between these organizations and other environmentally-oriented movements, as many agrarian and environmental organizations have also developed organic agriculture campaigns and programmes. The prominent environmental umbrella NGO, the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia, WALHI), states in its manifesto that consumers should buy organic products as a way of promoting environmental sustainability (WALHI 2009), and although it does not have specific organic agriculture campaigns, WALHI activists argue that many of their initiatives, including the promotion of community-based forestry and food sovereignty, ultimately aim to bring about an organic agricultural system (Interview, Jakarta, 3 February 2009). In a more concrete example, Gita Pertiwi, an environmental justice NGO active in Java since the early 1990s, launched a sustainable agriculture programme in 1999 and now sells organic products grown by affiliated farmers (Gita Pertiwi 2009).

At the same time, many not-for-profit organizations that promote organic agriculture are involved with commercial organic production and have gained accreditation from a variety of international certification systems. In the early 2000s the Indonesian Organic Alliance established a private organic certification company called BIOCert (BIOCert 2008b). Although the alliance continues to operate on a not-for-profit basis, it regularly promotes BIOCert services in its monthly bulletin and shares its office with the company, which not only supplies services to NGOs and farmers' organizations, but also inspects for several international commercial certification systems, including the Starbucks CAFE Practices programme (BIOCert 2008a). The Bina Sarana Bakti Foundation, while still legally an NGO, farms twelve hectares of land and employs one hundred workers to supply organic

vegetables for the Singapore export market and to supermarkets in Jakarta (*Jakarta Post* 2003; *Kompas* 2008). The Foundation gained organic certification from the National Association of Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA) in 2001 and now claims to be Indonesia's largest NASAA-certified farm (Bina Sarana Bakti 2012). The development of certified organic production in Indonesia has primarily been driven by international demand. However, the past decade has also seen increasing government support, with the formal recognition of organics in the early 2000s with the 'Go Organic 2010' campaign and the formulation of a set of guidelines for domestic certification (Ariesusanty 2011),[3] although it was not until January 2009 that the National Standardization Agency granted seven institutions the power to certify produce that complies with the national organic standard and subsequent demand for this certification has remained limited (Komite Akreditasi Nasional 2012).[4]

As a result of the ambiguous use of the term 'organic' and the coexistence of different organic certification systems, it is hard to quantify Indonesia's now-sizable organic sector. However, it is clear that organic agriculture – supported by a combination of market forces, government initiatives and social movement organizations – is becoming increasingly entrenched in Indonesia, in the same way that it did in countries where scholars have lamented the increasing institutionalization of the organic movement. In order to determine whether the Indonesian movement is also becoming institutionalized and, if so, what effect that process is having on its values, it is necessary to closely examine the changes that have occurred within specific social movement organizations.

Serikat Petani Indonesia

Officially established in July 1998, the Indonesian Peasants' Union (Serikat Petani Indonesia, SPI) traces its roots back to the mid-1990s. Initially a federation of eleven regional peasant unions concerned with land reform and peasants' rights, the central leadership was dominated by non-peasant activists from the Sintesa Foundation (Yayasan Sintesa), based in Medan (Peluso et al. 2008: 392). After relocating its Secretariat to Jakarta in 2003, SPI became closely involved with La Via Campesina – often described as the most powerful transnational agrarian movement in contemporary times – which promotes land reform and food sovereignty as an alternative to neoliberalism, and represents more than 150 sub-national social movement organizations around the world (Borras 2004; Borras, Edelman and Kay 2008; Desmarais 2002). Then, in December 2007, SPI leaders decided to restructure the federation as a unitary organization (Serikat Petani Indonesia 2008a), a decision that caused the Sundanese Peasants' Union and several other organizations to withdraw from the newly-established union rather than dissolve their own structures (Peluso et al. 2008: 392). In its new form, SPI claims to have branches down to the village level throughout the archipelago, especially in Java and Sumatra.

SPI campaigns around a wide range of issues, most notably agrarian reform, but it is also strongly involved with the promotion of sustainable or organic

agriculture (terms it uses interchangeably). According to one SPI activist, Elisha Samon, agrarian reform and organic farming are inextricably linked because only agrarian reform will allow for a truly sustainable agricultural system, and reform itself necessitates organic methods so that peasants can control the means of production (Interview, Jakarta, 12 January 2009). However, organic farming is also framed as a way for small farmers to improve their livelihoods by avoiding the expense associated with artificial inputs (Ellius 2008: 18).

As well as producing publications about the importance of organic agriculture, the SPI promotes organic methods at a grassroots level through seven organic learning centres located in Java, Sumatra and Eastern Indonesia. The centres are used to teach union members about the organization's core campaigns as well as to convey practical information about the conversion to organics. The first centre, established in Bogor in 2005, has subsequently developed its own label, PaTani Organik, which is used in the local marketing of produce. In the long term, the union aims to establish a locally-based system in which producers engage directly with consumers, but activists believe that the labelling of organic products – based on an honour system rather than legally-enforceable certification – remains necessary within the current market system (Risnandar 2005).

VECO-Indonesia

VECO-Indonesia, the Indonesian branch of the Belgium-based development organization, Vredeseilanden – which promotes the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices in Africa, Latin America and Asia as well as within Belgium itself – evolved from the organization established by René Daem in the 1970s. Vredeseilanden is engaged in a variety of activities in an attempt to bring about its vision of sustainability, which is anchored in the belief that small-scale, local agriculture controlled by 'family farmers' is capable of facilitating food security in a way that export-oriented agriculture cannot (Vredeseilanden 2008b). Most of the programmes that are funded and assisted by VECO-Indonesia promote a version of 'sustainable agriculture' that involves the ongoing use of a minimal amount of pesticides and fertilizers, although the organization also supports several initiatives that promote 'organic' agriculture as it is more conventionally understood in the West.

Through its central office in Denpasar, VECO-Indonesia coordinates projects in Bali, Eastern Indonesia, Sulawesi, and Central and Eastern Java. Its eight staff members work with local partners to ensure that their sustainable agriculture programmes run smoothly.[5] VECO-Indonesia's main function is to assist local NGOs with the implementation of sustainable agriculture projects by providing funding, facilities and capacity-building support. For example, it has worked with the Sustainable Indonesian Komodo Foundation in the West Manggarai district of Flores since 2002 (Vredeseilanden 2008a). Many of the farmers involved in the project are now converting to entirely organic production, and expect to sell their surplus rice for fifteen per cent more than the market price for conventional rice

(VECO-Indonesia 2008). In another example, VECO has worked with local NGOs in Solo since 2008 to increase the production and sale of organic rice. Its activities have included assisting farmers to secure guaranteed market access to a company which supplies organic rice to Kentucky Fried Chicken (Vredeseilanden 2011).

In line with Vredeseilanden's focus on increasing consumer awareness, more recently VECO-Indonesia has become more involved in promoting consumer change, for example, through showcases of sustainable agriculture and forums to teach consumers about the importance of healthy, sustainable foods. VECO-Indonesia also disseminates information about sustainable farming through the circulation of publications, including the Indonesian-language version of Vredeseilanden's quarterly magazine, which contains forty per cent domestically sourced articles. The magazine also serves a networking function, as each issue features a section profiling the activities and concerns of two to three groups involved with the promotion of alternative agriculture in Indonesia.

The Bali Organic Association

The Bali Organic Association (BOA), which evolved out of an informal discussion forum developed by Dr Ni Luh Kartini in 1981, was legally established as an NGO in 2004. The association is primarily driven by Kartini, now its Director, who is also a lecturer in the Department of Agriculture at Udayana University. Kartini was initially hesitant to criticize conventional agricultural products while promoting organic alternatives, as she was afraid of offending powerful agribusiness companies (Interview, Denpasar, 28 January 2009). However, the association now explains the health risks of consuming conventional food products in its awareness-raising programmes. Reflecting her increasingly critical stance, Kartini now argues that the pesticide content in conventional agricultural produce causes a variety of illnesses, mental disorders and dysfunctional social behaviour, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, incest, infanticide and even the American-led aggression in Iraq.

BOA frames organic agriculture as a way for farmers to return to a more traditional Balinese way of life, with individuals producing food for their own families, and only selling their products if the harvest is too large for personal consumption. In addition, it argues that organic farming offers a way of preserving the Balinese environment, which has become greatly damaged since the introduction of artificial fertilizers and pesticides. Indeed, Kartini claims that one story, in which Rama entered the soil in the shape of a worm and ate poison contained within the earth, so purifying the land, is a prediction of what will happen if conventional agricultural practices continue (Interview, Denpasar, 28 January 2009).

In its formative years, BOA worked with individual farmers at a grassroots level, convincing them of the importance of organic systems and explaining specific techniques. Staff invited interested farmers to the association's office, where they engaged in a dialogue about the problems the farmers faced and competing perspectives on conventional agricultural production. If the farmers

expressed interest, staff would teach them how to make organic fertilizers and pesticides, sending the farmers home with worms and fertilizer to try. Now the Bali Organic Association's activities have become well known in the area, and its staff are often invited to villages to teach. In one such village-based programme, the association has worked with VECO-Indonesia to provide technical support for a Balinese pilot of System of Rice Intensification, a method designed to increase the productivity of irrigated rice grown with reduced chemical inputs. In addition, like VECO-Indonesia (which continues to provide some of its funding), BOA has gradually shifted its focus from encouraging organic production to increasing consumer awareness about organics, with a particular focus on educating housewives and school children in Denpasar. As well as promoting organic products grown by others, Kartini also manages her own non-conventional agriculture company, CV Sarana Petani Bali, which produces alternative medicine and organic fertilizers made from worm castings.

International connections, frames and strategies

While all three organizations aim to promote the adoption of organic agricultural practices at the local level, the modes of activism and framing employed by each are influenced by their respective international connections, or lack thereof. Of the three, VECO-Indonesia, as the local branch of a Belgian organization, has the closest international connections. It also employs the most conservative modes of activism, pursuing an almost exclusive focus on grassroots educational activities targeting farmers and consumers. Through its initiatives, which include exhibitions of organic products, the publication of the technical LEISA magazine and workshops for farmers, sustainable agriculture is framed conservatively in terms of its environmental and health benefits. Importantly, however, these techniques have not been developed in response to the Indonesian context or as a result of tactical choices within the organization itself. Rather, VECO-Indonesia has a limited capacity to determine its own agenda independent of its parent organization, Vredeseilanden, and is upwardly accountable to the Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, from which it obtains more than sixty per cent of its funding. These close international linkages clearly influence both the process of institutionalization and value change.

Although SPI is also shaped by a close international linkage – its affiliation with the transnational peasant movement, La Via Campesina – the union's relationship with this network supports its use of radical techniques. From 2004, SPI shared its Secretariat in Jakarta with the Via Campesina International Secretariat, and Henry Saragih has served simultaneously as the General Secretary of the Indonesian union and as the International Coordinator of La Via Campesina. Not surprisingly, the agenda pursued internationally by La Via Campesina is mirrored in the modes of activism employed by SPI in Indonesia, for example, on-the-ground assistance to peasants involved in existing agrarian conflict, expressions of solidarity with protesting peasants through public statements, and the publication of its monthly bulletin, *Pembaruan Tani*.

The union's relatively radical stance is further apparent in its framing of sustainable agriculture, which, like La Via Campesina, it presents in contradistinction to neoliberalism. Both organizations conduct campaigns in support of what they describe as the related issues of sustainable agriculture, food sovereignty and anti-neoliberalism, arguing that it is the right of all nations to determine what food they produce and how, and to fulfil the nutritional needs of their citizens (Federasi Serikat Petani Indonesia and La Via Campesina 2006). SPI's campaigns for food sovereignty are further justified as vital for the protection of peasants' rights, with activists contending that existing neo-liberal political and economic policies violate these rights on a domestic and international level. It publishes a wide variety of this kind of analysis on its website, which they try to make accessible in Indonesian, English, Spanish and French, thereby presenting this discourse as an appeal to the international community as well as Indonesian audiences.

The similarity between the campaigns conducted by SPI and La Via Campesina has led Peluso et al. (2008: 392) to contend that SPI has become overly influenced by international priorities, to the extent that it seeks 'outward legitimacy' at the expense of its domestic focus. They go on to argue that the promotion of organic agriculture is a key example of SPI's tendency to frame campaigns to attract the international community. However, SPI's claim that organics can improve livelihoods has clear appeal for Indonesian farmers, and thus has considerable relevance in the Indonesian context as well. Further, although the union, and particularly Saragih, is active in targeting international forums, it has also remained highly active in promoting local direct action.[6] While the union is thus clearly shaped by its relationship with La Via Campesina, and attempts to appeal to the same international audiences, at the same time this international linkage strengthens the union's ability to promote radical agendas and mass action within Indonesia.

In contrast to SPI and VECO, BOA is not part of any international network. Moreover, it frames its support of organic agriculture in Balinese terms, presenting organic farming as being in harmony with Balinese culture and Hinduism, which Kartini notes is similarly based on the idea of balance in nature.[7] As the organization does not rely on international support, Kartini is able to appeal directly to local farmers without also framing organics in international terms, arguing instead that switching to organic agriculture can prevent the poisoning of the soil, which she contends will eventually lead to the destruction of mankind as predicted in Hindu myths (Interview, Denpasar, 28 January 2009). In order to strengthen what Kartini understands as the integral link between organics and Balinese culture, BOA works closely with spiritual and indigenous medicine community groups, as well as Utama Spice, a private company that sells traditional Balinese medicines. In short, unlike the other two organizations described here, BOA frames organic agriculture in particularly local terms.

Although BOA, VECO and SPI pursue dissimilar framing strategies, and are differently influenced by international linkages, all three practise some form of market engagement as a mode of activism. While the organic activists discussed here are critical of the existing economic system to varying degrees, some of their core concerns are material, and they all frame organic agriculture – including not

just the production but also the sale of organic products – as a way of improving livelihoods. BOA's director, Kartini, has her own alternative agriculture company, and the association works with local farmers' markets and alternative medicine businesses; SPI produces organic vegetables and markets its own label of organic products as well as assisting farmers with the conversion to organics so they can grow and market such products themselves; and VECO concentrates on assisting farmers – who then commercially market their sustainable products – as well as organizing product exhibitions to raise consumer awareness.

None of the organizations believe that interaction with the market is antithetical to its values. Even SPI, which expresses the most overarching criticism of capitalism, recognizes that its members must engage with the current economic system in order to improve their standard of living in the short term. Rogier Eijkens, the Country Representative of VECO-Indonesia, goes so far as to argue that international supermarkets – in their attempts to engineer a 'healthy' brand image – have been the primary driver behind the growth of the organic trend in Indonesia (Interview, Denpasar, 29 January 2009).[8] It follows that although scholars describe the commercialization of organics as a key indicator of both institutionalization and deradicalization, this is not the case in Indonesia, where social movement organizations' involvement in the commercial organic market does not correlate with a shift in practice or values, and is better understood as being a deliberately adopted social movement strategy.

Institutionalization and the evolution of social movements

The experiences of the three organizations described here do not lend support to the contention that the progression towards greater institutional organization leads to the deradicalization of movement values and tactics. VECO-Indonesia is so interlinked with its parent organization that it cannot be assessed as a discrete entity, and thus must be evaluated in tandem with Vredeseilanden. Through a series of mergers, Vredeseilanden has developed from informal roots to become a government-sponsored, international development organization concerned with sustainable agriculture, reflecting a process of organizational growth and consolidation as described by scholars of institutionalization. As the organization is hierarchically structured, VECO-Indonesia is dominated by its home office in Belgium and has a clear division of labour within the domestic office. It also controls a large budget, which is another of the characteristics that scholars of the environmental movement highlight as being symptomatic of institutionalization (cf. Carter 2001). Further, in line with the assertion that such organizational institutionalization precludes radical actions or values, VECO-Indonesia does pursue a relatively conservative agenda, seeking to bring about limited changes to the status quo through politically acceptable actions such as lobbying governments and the commercial sector. While the organization is also engaged in grassroots efforts to implement sustainable agricultural systems, it emphasizes its role in improving farmers' livelihoods in practical terms and does not attempt to frame its initiatives in relation to a radical philosophy.

However, VECO-Indonesia has always been a politically moderate organization. Unlike the examples given by Michels (1962), it has not developed from a social movement characterized by mass mobilization. Rather, it can be better understood in line with Carter's (2001) description of conservation organizations, which have sought minor changes to the existing system through conventional means. Thus, while VECO-Indonesia has become more organizationally institutionalized over time, its parent organization and its precursors were also focused on development initiatives, and similarly aimed to bring about small benefits for communities on a local level through politically acceptable means. In this respect, VECO's conservatism, although it exists in a context of organizational institutionalization, cannot be interpreted as supporting the contention that institutionalization leads to the deradicalization of movement objectives because VECO and Vredeseilanden were never part of a radical social movement to begin with.

SPI is a more interesting case, as it exhibits several signs of institutionalization but continues to promote overtly radical objectives. SPI is formally structured and hierarchically organized, with a secretariat that is controlled according to a formal division of labour. Moreover, Saragih has continued to lead the organization despite an understanding that a peasant would eventually assume the role, conforming to Michels' (1962) contention that institutionalization is associated with movement leaders becoming entrenched in positions of power. In addition to these organizational factors, the union's choice of collective action methods, such as lobbying and the use of media press releases, is also indicative of institutionalization. However, while SPI exhibits institutionalized characteristics, its values and some of its tactics remain radical. It demands significant changes to the current political and economic systems in its campaigns for land reform and its opposition to neoliberal economic policies. Although SPI does not identify as a socialist organization, its support for agrarian reform and organics is framed in part around the importance of peasants owning the means of production, echoing socialist demands for the collective ownership of capital. These socialist leanings are considered radical in the Indonesian context, in which any discourse that could be interpreted as tending towards Communism was strongly suppressed during the New Order period and remains highly stigmatized (cf. McGregor and Hearman 2007).

Some of SPI's tactics are also radical, including peasant mobilization and the provision of support for peasant occupations of public and private land. The violent reaction that such actions have elicited from Indonesia's security forces is indicative of the degree to which these activities are considered to be subversive, and thus worthy of repression. For example, the union claims that in one incident in Lombok in 2005, security forces interrupted a peaceful gathering of one thousand peasants who were attending a union meeting by firing on the crowd with tear gas, rubber, plastic and metal bullets, wounding thirty-three peasants (Federasi Serikat Petani Indonesia 2006; La Via Campesina 2005). The union's website documents dozens of similar incidences of violence committed by security forces against union members, especially those occupying land claimed by state or private interests (Serikat Petani Indonesia 2008b, 2009a, 2009b). SPI's

willingness to engage in direct confrontation indicates that, although organizationally institutionalized, its values and tactics continue to be radical, especially in regard to land reform. SPI's relationship with La Via Campesina adds to this apparent paradox, as it promotes both institutionalization and the maintenance of radical values. On one hand, Saragih's entrenchment in a position of power is strengthened by the link between the two organizations: SPI members may be reluctant to vote Saragih out for fear of weakening SPI's relationship with La Via Campesina. On the other hand, its links with a transnational activist network that is actively involved in land reform campaigns supports SPI's use of mass action and radical discursive frames in Indonesia.

Overall, then, SPI offers an important counter-case to the examples provided by Piven and Cloward (1977), who argue that the institutionalization of 'poor people's movements' in the United States of America lead to opportunities to bargain with authorities and ultimately resulted in leaders compromising movement objectives. Although SPI could be considered part of a 'poor people's movement' that has become organizationally institutionalized, it has not exchanged the threat of direct action for compromises in the way that these authors describe. While many variables have affected the different way in which the Indonesian union has developed, two key contextual factors may go some way towards explaining this difference. First, the conflicts with which SPI is associated are so diverse and involve such a large number of parties that it may not be practicable for leaders to make overarching compromises on behalf of union members. Further, whereas the struggles that Piven and Cloward describe involved demands for better conditions including higher wages, what is at stake in many of the Indonesian conflicts is whether peasants can access land, which is perhaps a more fundamental problem, since it is not a struggle for improved conditions but rather a struggle to maintain a livelihood at all. In these circumstances, it is unlikely that SPI would have the power to instruct its members to cease occupations even if a situation for compromise that benefited the organization itself arose.

The BOA also fails to conform to the dichotomy proposed by scholars between institutionalized and non-institutionalized social movement organizations. The association is officially structured in a hierarchical manner, with Kartini clearly directing all organization activities from the top down. It is also somewhat professionalized and specialized, signs that scholars of the environmental movement in particular identify as being associated with institutionalization (cf. Rootes 2004; van der Heijden 1997). Full-time staff, rather than volunteers, run the organization, and as a Doctor of Organic Agriculture, Kartini is a specialist in her field. However, in this instance, organizational institutionalization has coincided with increasing radicalization. As discussed above, Kartini abandoned her former hesitance in the mid-2000s, and now promotes organic agriculture to both farmers and consumers through highly-loaded arguments against the use of chemical pesticides. The organization is also critical of collaboration with government: Kartini has publically dismissed Governor I Made Mangku Pastika's organic programme as merely 'lip-service', while at the same time denouncing his plan to subsidize organic fertilizer as just another example of government support for big business

(VECO-Indonesia 2011). Like SPI, then, BOA is organizationally institutionalized but not deradicalized. This suggests that SPI has not simply 'escaped' the trajectory of deradicalization because of its connection with the radical La Via Campesina, as BOA has no radical international partners but has nevertheless simultaneously progressed towards greater institutionalization and radicalization.

Importantly, the existence of Kartini's company, CV Sarana Petani Bali, could be a driving force for the Bali Organic Association's increasing radicalization, as it is in Kartini's economic interest to make strong critiques of the conventional agricultural system in order to increase organic product sales, and thus ensure personal profit. This is a particularly interesting counter-example to much of the literature on the organic movement, where many scholars argue that the development of commercialized organic production is associated with the deradicalization of the movement itself (DeLind 2000; Guthman 1998; Tovey 1997). A few studies have linked institutionalization with radicalization, arguing that the normative institutionalization of the organic concept in Australia and New Zealand has led to radicalization of the movement (cf. Campbell and Liepins 2001; Lyons and Lawrence 2001). However, these scholars assert that this radicalization has occurred as a backlash against the normative institutionalization of the organic concept, which they contend inspired a resistant section of the movement to strengthen its ties and objectives.

In contrast, despite increasing recognition of organics in Indonesia and especially Bali, the Indonesian organic movement is not yet normatively institutionalized. The increasingly radical tactics pursued by the BOA are thus not comparable to the Australian and New Zealand experience, and are better explained in part through a consideration of the economic interests associated with Kartini's company. This example illustrates that the commercialization of organics may, in certain cases, foster extremism if movement participants believe that radical discourse will increase the appeal, and thus viability, of organics. While the BOA may be somewhat unusual in its adoption of such contentious campaign tactics, nevertheless the organization's development in this manner offers further weight to arguments for a non-linear relationship between institutionalization and deradicalization.

Conclusion

Although studies show that institutionalization is linked with conventionalization in many Western examples, in the Indonesian case there is clearly no linear relationship between these variables. In all three cases examined here, organizational institutionalization has occurred to some degree. However, none of these cases supports the contention that institutionalization leads to the deradicalization of social movement goals and tactics. Indeed, the experience of two of these three organizations demonstrates that it is possible for organizations to remain radical, and even adopt increasingly radical tactics, while becoming increasingly institutionalized. In the case of SPI, the continued use of radical frames and modes of action is supported by the organization's relationship with the radical

transnational agrarian movement, La Via Campesina. In the case of BOA, international linkages have not played a role; instead, its apparent radicalization is – at least in part – explained by the economic benefits of radical discourse.

These cases suggest that institutionalization does not directly correlate with any particular values, conventional or otherwise, and that the analysis of organizational institutionalization is a poor indicator of the general progression of social movement organizations. This finding brings into question the validity of analyses that consider institutionalization to be a general predictor of the evolution of social movements. While Michels (1962: 353) described institutionalization as a 'universally applicable social law', contending that movement leaders will inevitably become detached from the true values of their movement, these Indonesian cases indicate that institutionalization does not operate in such a predictable manner. Ultimately a wide variety of factors shape the development of social movement organizations and the values they espouse, suggesting that it erroneous to assume that institutionalization will necessarily undermine the fundamental values of any social movement.

Notes

1 The Indonesian organic movement is highly diverse. This chapter does not attempt to trace the development of the movement as a whole. The empirical material presented in this chapter is drawn mainly from primary data obtained through interviews conducted during early 2009 with representatives from Serikat Petani Indonesia, La Via Campesina, the Bali Organic Association, VECO-Indonesia, WALHI, World Education Indonesia and the Indonesian Soil Research Institute.

2 In addition to these relatively large NGOs and alliances, the post-Suharto period has seen the emergence of dozens of smaller organizations that support the development of alternative agricultural systems in a variety of ways. For a more comprehensive discussion of Indonesian organizations involved in the promotion of organics, see the analysis in the contacts section of *SALAM*, the Indonesian edition of the *International Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture* (LEISA) magazine.

3 The guidelines were developed by the National Standardization Agency and enshrined in the SNI 01–6729-2002 Sistem Pangan Organik, which has subsequently been revised in the SNI 80/KEP/BSN/7/2010 (Badan Standardisasi Nasional 2012).

4 Some regional leaders have been proactive in supporting the local development of sustainable agriculture. For example, the Balinese Governor I Made Mangku Pastika launched a 'Bali Organic 2013' campaign in March 2011 (*Jakarta Post* 2011a, 2011b).

5 Vredeseilanden's main Indonesian partners as Asosiasi Petani Kopi Toraja (APKT); Asosiasi Petani Padi Organik Boyolali (APPOLI); ATOM; Delegasi Sosial (Delsos); Jaringan Petani Wulang Gitang (JANTAN); Lembaga Advokasi Masyarakat (LAPMAS); Lembaga Studi Kemasyarakatan dan Bina Bakat (LSK-BB); WASIAT; Yayasan An Feot Ana (YAFA); Yayasan Ayu Tani (YAT); Yayasan Duta Pelayan Masyarakat (YDPM); Yayasan Jaya Lestari Desa (JALESA); Yayasan Komodo Indonesia Lestari (Yakines); Yayasan Komunitas Indonesia (YAKOMI); Yayasan Mitra Tani Mandiri (YMTM); Yayasan Mitra Tani Mandiri Ngada (YMTM-Ngada); and Yayasan Tana Nua (YTN). The report notes that its main partners for political work and campaigns about organic farming are Aliansi Petani Indonesia (API); Bali Consortium; Koalisi Rakyat untuk Kedaulatan Pangan (KRKP); and Serikat Bersama Indonesia Berseru (SBIB); and Solo Raya Consortium (Vredeseilanden 2010).

6 Saragih's blog, for example, primarily documents speeches he has given at various international protests (Saragih 2010).
7 Although VECO-Indonesia has provided a small amount of support for the association since the mid-2000s, BOA remains primarily self-financed and independent.
8 Eijkens went on to note that VECO-Indonesia is now pursuing a greater focus on consumer awareness to support this commercialization, since the shift to organic agricultural production can only be successful if there is consumer demand for such products. Blanc (2009) similarly argues that in Brazil the entry of powerful supermarket chains into the organic sector has benefited small family farmers.

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6 Burmese social movements in exile

Labour, migration and democracy

Dennis Arnold

Current international legal norms place people from Myanmar who leave their homes into one of three narrow categories: refugees, internally displaced persons and economic migrants.[1] According to these categories, in 2011 there were some 2 to 3 million Burmese migrant workers in Thailand, with about 1.5 million more in Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, India and other countries, in all comprising over 10–15 per cent of the country's labour force. There are also roughly 500,000 internally displaced persons inside Myanmar, and about 150,000 refugees living in nine camps on the Thai side of the Thai–Myanmar border (TBBC n.d.). Burmese migrant workers, the focus of this chapter, are routinely portrayed as victims of the military regime, who shall some day benefit from democratization. Proponents of this perspective suggest that democratization will foster 'economic development' and reduce the need to migrate, and those who do migrate will be protected through government-to-government regulations. These views are common among organizations that bind the fate of migrants to the normalization of the Burmese nation. Migrants are, in effect, 'held hostage' to regime change (KHRG 2007). Whether the 'new' Myanmar is able to deliver on change remains to be seen.

The social, political and economic malaise in Myanmar is well documented, and represents a starting point to understand migrant social dynamics. A central issue is that both (economic) migrants and (political) refugees have long been viewed as passive rather than active agents in ongoing processes of social, political, cultural and economic change. Yet migration – in itself is a major form of agency exercised by workers around the world (Hardt and Negri 2000) – is all the more significant when it involves the sorts of challenges faced by Burmese migrants (Glassman 2010). Mainstream views of 'push and pull' factors, which have left a deep imprint on analyses of Burmese migrant issues in Thailand, overestimate the role of economic and structural forces in the migrant experience. The central shortcoming of the push-pull framework is migrants are positioned as being totally determined and overwhelmed by political-economic structural forces (Mezzadra 2011). It does not reflect the complex set of motivations that lead Burmese to leave their homes, nor does it provide protection for those at risk at home and abroad (KHRG 2009). The 'migrants as passive victims' trope is thus perpetuated in the structures and concepts that frame migration. What this approach misses is the extent to which migrant activism is potentially transformative in the workplace, at the border, and

in a democratic Myanmar.[2] This brings into question the widely accepted concept of democracy from above – which hinges on international pressure and regime change – prominent among many Burmese exiles and their supporters.

Three phases of migrant workers' struggles in Thailand have signalled the transition of workers' transformative potential in relation to the workplace, community and democratization. The first was characterized by the shift from small-scale migrant flows into small-scale factories in the Thai border-town of Mae Sot, to much larger reserves of labour and severe abuse at the workplace and in workers' communities at the hands of authorities and employers. During this phase (in the 1990s to early 2000s) there was little organized response from workers or labour organizations. Migrants' hopes were largely bound to international movements for regime change that would ensure government-to-government migration management and legal rights. The second phase was characterized by wildcat strikes and the initial phases of migrant organizing. This was centred in Mae Sot from 2002 and has spread from workplace-specific grievances to broader community and cultural organizing in Mae Sot and other parts of Thailand, where Burmese workers and activists in Mae Sot have been a catalyst for protest. During this phase, migrants recognized their power to influence work conditions through negotiations with employers or court cases. The third phase, from 2008, has been marked by Burmese democracy organizations increasingly recognizing migrants' potential role in democratization in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, when workers organized shipments of food and donations to those affected, demonstrating their capacity to mobilize the community and their cross-border connections in a short time frame. According to Dr Naing Aung, Secretary General of the Forum for Democracy in Burma, since that time, democracy organizations have increasingly been 'reaching out' to migrants on labour and human rights issues (Interview, Mae Sot, 13 July 2009). This recognition has been part of a pronounced shift from top-down regime change to gradual reform and democratization, and as a result, a role for migrant workers is taking a more discernible shape.

The task at hand, then, is to understand the tensions between 'democratization from above' and migrant agency 'from below'. This chapter explores these tensions by analysing different models of migrant labour activism in Mae Sot, which is now home to some 200,000 Burmese migrant workers. Mae Sot is the hub of the Burmese labour movement, and a globally-linked political centre where exiled democracy activists consider the future of Myanmar. Having first offered a brief sketch of factors that frame migration from Myanmar, the chapter focuses on migrants' daily insecurity, both in the workplace and in day-to-day life in Mae Sot, and on the strategies they employ to mediate these exploitative and often violent relationships. It then considers responses from The Federation of Trade Unions-Burma (FTUB) and the Yaung Chi Oo Workers Association (YCO) as case studies through which to explore the links between migrant activism and the democracy movement. Based on these case studies, the chapter argues that Burmese migrants have begun to recognize their agency at the workplace and in communities – as have certain labour and democracy movement organizations. However, the 'informalized' mode through which Burmese migrant labourers

work in Thailand restricts possibilities for the emergence of a working class able to become active participants in Myanmar's democratization or to truly realize the full potential of their collective labour power. 'Top-down' state-centric approaches to democratization relegate migrants to passivity, while 'bottom-up' approaches have largely stalled at factory-level networking, wildcat strikes and court cases. As a consequence, the informalization of labour not only limits enduring forms of collective action, it also stimulates debate on the viability of workplace, class and nation state as the scales or categories through which social change is channelled.

The Myanmar context

The junta that governed Myanmar from 1962 to 2010 is widely regarded as one of the world's most violent regimes.[3] Human and labour rights violations, which are well documented, include forced labour and portering, systematic use of rape to terrorize populations (particularly in Shan state), forcible relocation and concerns for mere survival due to ongoing conflicts.[4] As a result, the distinction between political and economic migration is blurred. Research by the International Rescue Committee and Tufts University in 2006 (Green-Rauenhorst et al. 2008: 2) found that of the 1,704 migrants workers from Myanmar living in Thailand interviewed, some fifty per cent may have had claims to refugee status, but that only a small number 'actually receive any aid or protection either from the Thai government or from international aid agencies'.

Generally speaking the frequency of human rights abuses increases in borderland areas where the military's control is less secure. In the mid-1990s, Burmese migrants in Thailand came predominantly from border areas where there was armed conflict, or where the military was implementing polices of forced relocation and forced labour (MAP 2006). But in the 2000s, as the economic situation deteriorated, migrant networks and recruitment expanded and the need for migrant labour in Thailand deepened, they increasingly came from all over Myanmar (ibid).[5] As a result, Burmese migrants have come to be located throughout Thailand and are now a critical component of the Thai economy – working in light manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries and seafood processing, domestic work and construction. Migrant pay is generally below legal minimums, and basic labour rights are routinely violated. Despite the poor conditions it is deemed preferable due to even lower labour standards and lack of employment opportunities in Myanmar.

Militarization and liberalization of agriculture are two central structural considerations when analysing this exodus. Since the late 1960s the military has used a counter-insurgency policy termed the 'four cuts', which aims to cut off insurgents' access to food, finances, intelligence and recruits. As armed opposition groups across the country have become weaker, areas under SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) control have steadily grown. In addition, the Burmese military expanded from 180,000 to roughly 600,000 personnel from 1988 to the late 2000s (Maung Aung Myoe 2009). During that period, its ongoing operations became directly dependent on the country's income from agriculture, industry

and trade. According to the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG 2009), the concentration of wealth and resources at the highest levels of military control and the simultaneous expansion of the size and operations of local military units has led to two forms of resource distribution. First, it has led to an amassing of Myanmar's natural resource wealth offshore – deriving primarily from newly accessible natural gas fields – by top officials (Turnell 2009). Second, local-level armed forces have become dependent on the civilian population in rural Myanmar, a trend explicit in a 1997 order by the War Office to the country's 12 Regional Commanders 'to meet their basic logistical needs locally, rather than rely on the central supply system' (KHRG 2009: 18). This policy, typically termed 'living off the land', has placed the burden of financing militarization on the largely rural population of Myanmar through an extensive array of demands enforced on village communities (ibid). Alongside abuse by the military are equally political yet less overtly violent factors that set populations in motion. Indeed, in what may be the most comprehensive research on conditions for agricultural labourers in Myanmar, Fujita (2009: 264) concludes, based on case studies in Yangon and Bago Divisions (areas in central Myanmar long controlled by the armed forces), that agricultural labourers 'were reduced to a bare subsistence level during the last two or three decades, and are now suffering "absolute poverty" '. On the one hand, that poverty is the result of persistent exploitation and abuse (Caouette and Pack 2002). On the other, economic liberalization has fuelled disparities in wealth (Campbell 2011, citing Fujita 2009; Okamoto 2008).

Many 'economic migrants' consider both basic social reproduction of labour power (i.e. the means of subsistence, daily and generational reproduction of the capacity to labour) and protection from life-threatening state violence into their migration decisions. For example, KHRG (2009) research found that 78 per cent of migrant workers from Karen State interviewed cited one or several exploitative abuses as their reason for migration, including forced labour (47 per cent), extortion (29 per cent), looting by the SPDC and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (14 per cent), and restrictions on movement (12 per cent). Thus, migration is a form of resistance to or avoidance of the Burmese state (Aung 2010) – a fact that has important implications for the strategies of migrant labour organizations in the Thai border town of Mae Sot.

Exploitation along the border

Located across the Moei River from the Burmese town of Myawaddy, Mae Sot is the busiest of Thailand–Myanmar trading points. There are also three refugee camps in the vicinity (Tak Province), comprising over half the total refugee population in Thailand. Mae Sot is unique in that it is host to some 200,000 Burmese migrant workers – some of whom have lived in the town for years, others using it as a transit point to destinations in central and other parts of Thailand – and a global centre for the Burmese dissident movement (the '8-8-88 generation'). The town's contemporary political economy is linked to the political crisis in Myanmar following the student uprising in 1988 and the unrecognized elections in 1990; the

opening and expansion of official border trade between Myanmar and Thailand (superseding 'illegal' trade between ethnic insurgent groups and Thailand when Myanmar was isolationist); and the emerging industrial border economy centred on the large supply of Burmese migrant labour.

Until the mid-1980s, different ethnic and political groups controlled the Myanmar–Thailand border. Then from 1984 the Burmese Army (Tatmadaw) launched a series of offensives that increased their control of key border areas. From 1988, students, monks, workers and others who took part in mass demonstrations against the military regime also moved to the border areas. In the late 1980s roughly 10,000 fled to the border after the army crushed the 1988 uprising, killing thousands (TBBC n.d.). Once in the borderlands, the activists formed alliances with different ethnic organizations. Many were based in the Karen National Union (KNU) headquarters at Manerplaw, with over 30 additional camps established along the Thailand and India borders.

The most prominent of the student-oriented groups was the All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF), a predecessor of organizations including the Burma Lawyers Council, Women's League of Burma, the Democratic Voice of Burma, Burma Labour Solidarity Organization and YCO.[6] The ABSDF was once a quite powerful force, declining from 20,000 members in 1990 to some 200 in 2009 (Interview, Naing Aung, 21 November 2009). A turning point for the ABSDF was the fall of Manerplaw to the Tatmadaw in 1995. Within a few years the student border camps had mostly moved into Thailand, a large proportion to border towns including Mae Sot, while others had relocated to refugee camps. It is during this period that the Tatmadaw consolidated control of much of (but not all) of the Myanmar–Thailand border areas by forcibly relocating villages, which led to rapidly increasing numbers of internal and international refugees.

Throughout this period, Myanmar increasingly 'opened' its borders to foreign trade and investment. Importantly, the Thai government began to see Myanmar as a large trade partner and investment destination, and source of natural resources including hydroelectric power and gas, rather than a Cold War threat (Glassman 2010). Support and tolerance for the student and ethnic insurgents subsequently waned. In the 2000s the Thai government restricted Burmese exiled organizations ability to work in Thailand. For instance, in 2005 many hundreds of Burmese with UNHCR-recognized Person of Concern status were forced to move to refugee camps, many have since resettled in third countries. This has affected many organizations. For example, in 2004–05 the three core leaders of YCO resettled in third countries, two in Norway and one in the US. While one of the three continues to head the organization, it has the lost other two to resettlement. Meanwhile, the mobility of many who have stayed in Thailand without third state refugee status is severely limited. Simply travelling outside of the Mae Sot border or other areas requires special permission from local authorities that can take several weeks to secure, if it is not rejected out of hand.[7]

Another dimension of the situation in Mae Sot is its status as the most industrialized of the 'border growth nodes' in Thailand and the Greater Mekong

Subregion (Arnold 2010).[8] This is driven by rapid expansion of textile and garment manufacturing. Profitability in Mae Sot is inextricably linked to reserves of migrant workers, who are distributed roughly 40:40:20 in manufacturing (primarily garments), agriculture, and domestic work or services (Arnold 2010). Mae Sot factories first opened in the mid-1990s. In 2009 there were roughly 400. The growth of the textile and garment manufacturing in Mae Sot has been influenced by several factors, including the decreasing competitiveness of the industry in Bangkok and Central Thailand; abundant reserves of Burmese migrant labour, paid at a third to half of the prevailing minimum wage; tax incentives; infrastructure investments in Mae Sot and between Mae Sot and Bangkok; and almost no enforcement of labour, occupational health and safety and environmental regulations. Agro-industry, which is concentrated in vegetable crops and flowers (Pitch 2007), is dominated by Thai investors, while textiles and garments are roughly 70–30 per cent Thai (including joint ventures[9]) and foreign-owned (Arnold 2010). Mae Sot is also home to large gem and jewellery markets, where Burmese traders sell their goods. Plans for a Mae Sot-Myawaddy Special Economic Zone seek to expand the border economy with further infrastructure development, relaxed migrant registration and other policies, although the controversial project has been in limbo since its formal inception in 2005 under administration of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (Arnold 2010).

Work conditions for Burmese in Mae Sot's factories are extremely poor. Pay is well below the minimum wage for days of between 12 and 16 hours, and more in peak periods. The majority of workers living in factory dorms are not allowed to leave the compound, sexual abuse is common and there are myriad other problems (Arnold 2010). Migrant workers must deal with the local police, border police and other state authorities such as the National Security Council who are vigilant in policing workers who lack registration rights or proper identification. In fact, the police and military are the most powerful actors in the region (Arnold and Pickles 2011). With a preponderance of illegal and unregistered workers with few actionable rights, the Burmese community of Mae Sot falls ready victim to the police who are able to extort money from them and from the factory owners who employ 'illegal' or unregistered workers. Workers found without their permit (those not registered but also those with a photocopy) must pay a bribe, between 100 and 200 baht (Interviews with garment workers, 8 and 10 June 2008). Those not able to pay the bribe may be taken to jail. In this regime of policing, managers are able to constrain workers' movements, with unregistered workers readily locked in factory compounds and allowed to move about the community only at certain times such as days off or the monthly pay-day. Few if any factories register their full workforce with the Ministry of Labour, making them vulnerable to investigation or raids by the police. These conditions mean that migrant workers in Mae Sot – with a work permit or not – enjoy few if any political or social rights. It is in the context of border economic expansion, armed conflict, and political exiles that Mae Sot has emerged as a centre of migrant labour and activism.

Labour organizing in Mae Sot

Highly complex and exploitative social and political economic structures frame Burmese migrant and activist experiences in both Myanmar and Thailand. A Human Rights Watch report has summarized the situation for Burmese migrants as being caught between the tiger and the crocodile, referring to abuses from state officials and employers on both sides of the border (Human Rights Watch 2010). The situation for migrant workers is exacerbated by the fact that under Thailand's Labour Protection Act only Thai nationals may form unions, and migrant workers may only join unions formed and led by Thais.[10]

While there are no registered trade unions at all in Mae Sot, the precarious working, social and legal conditions for Burmese migrants have led to the emergence of distinct groups of local actors. The most established Burmese labour organizations in Mae Sot are YCO, the FTUB and the Burma Labour Solidarity Organization. New entrants from the mid-2000s include the Joint Action Committee for Burmese Affairs. Numerous Thailand-based labour NGOs also work in Mae Sot, including those focusing on migrant workers, legal issues and solidarity support for the Thai labour movement. Among these are the Chiang Mai-based MAP Foundation, whose central activity is the provision of legal support for migrant workers in cooperation with the Law Society of Thailand and YCO. The Mae Sot Labor Law Clinic, established by the Bangkok-based NGO, Human Rights and Development Foundation, is another NGO providing legal assistance to Mae Sot residents, both migrants and Thais. Thai labour solidarity NGOs with links to Thai trade unions have also worked in Mae Sot, including the Bangkok-based Thai Labour Campaign (See Brown and na Ayudhya, this volume), whose efforts have centred on promoting migrant issues among key trade unions and organizations in the Thai labour movement. International funding and at times engagement with these organizations has come from the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, Norwegian Church Aid and Union AID (New Zealand), among others. Funding and 'partnerships' run the gamut from one-time grants to several years of support.

Burmese exiles form the core of these organizations' activities in Mae Sot. These activists generally adopt one of two fundamental assumptions – that normalization of the Burmese nation state is a necessary precondition for Burmese migrants to exercise their agency (i.e. democratization 'from above'), or that a Burmese migrant working class is forming with collective interests 'from below'. Of the two organizations profiled here, YCO pursues a more radical form of grassroots democracy based on networks that correspond to the shifting flow of workers from one workplace and geographic area to another. Meanwhile, the FTUB pursues a more traditional, hierarchical approach to trade unionism's role in a democratic society based on the principles of tripartism, the presence of sector-specific unions, and the role of the state as mediator in capital–labour relations. As discussed below, the most prominent aspects of the work of the FTUB and YCO – generating international sanctions, and workers' militant struggles at the workplace and in the community, respectively – illuminate the potential agency of

the migrant in struggles for democracy at the workplace, in the community and across borders.

The FTUB, regime change and unionizing

The FTUB, an exiled trade union based in Bangkok, has maintained an office and activities in Mae Sot for over 15 years. The trade union formed in 1991 and includes as leaders workers and students involved in the democracy protests in 1988. The Chairman of the FTUB, U Hla Oo, was elected Member of Parliament in the aborted 1990 elections. The secretary general of the FTUB is also secretary general of the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), a coalition of exiled opposition groups. FTUB activists work to 'restore democracy, human rights, social justice and trade-unionism for Burma and the people of Burma' (www.ftub.org). The organization has three primary geographic foci for its activities: inside Myanmar, internationally, and in Thailand. Inside Myanmar, the FTUB has engaged in underground organizing in different sectors including textiles, clothing, health, education, agriculture, forestry and public services. Internationally, they seek to raise awareness about the rights of workers living in Myanmar (Grumiau 2009). They are an affiliate of the Brussels-based International Trade Union Confederation, and receive project support from national trade union centres in Australia, Japan, the US and other countries. In sum, they are a prominent organization driving international sanctions against the Burmese military for human and labour rights abuses – with the objective of regime change.[11]

For the FTUB, regime change and democratization are necessary preconditions for substantial improvements in migrants' socio-economic situation. Pursuing this end, the FTUB's underground organizers in Myanmar have documented forced labour and other human and labour rights violations, which have provided the basis for international sanctions. This strategy was reflected in the NCUB 2010 Congress, where constituents' efforts at '[b]ringing down the military dictatorship clique and forming an interim government based on the 1990 election results and materialization of the democratic federal union of Burma' were endorsed (NCUB 2010). In the unlikely event that the NCUB's key objective is achieved, analysts have pointed out the opposition's inability to move beyond this single, all-defining issue (Steinberg 2009). In the meantime, it is clear that the strategy of regime change shapes the FTUB's interactions with migrants.

In Thailand, one of two main focuses of the FTUB's work is on social support. Social support activities include awareness-raising on trafficking issues in cooperation with the ILO, facilitating legal assistance for workplace grievances in cooperation with the Mae Sot Labor Law Clinic and NGOs, and running several schools for over 200 migrant children in Mae Sot. This is clearly important work, but it is work that aims to ameliorate migrants' suffering until the political 'revolution' is realized. The second primary objective of the FTUB's activities in Thailand (as well as Malaysia and Japan) is to organize migrants to join Thai trade unions. Mae Sot has been a focal point of these activities. Central to this enterprise

is the attempt to embed Burmese migrant workers, and eventually workers in Myanmar, in industrial relations systems based on a particular historical arrangement of capital–labour relations in the West (Chang 2009). The terminology of industrial relations (collective bargaining, collective agreements, workers' councils, arbitration councils and tripartite committees) is central in this process, which assumes the existence of 'formal' employer–employee relationships and favours a form of economic trade unionism based on Western models that discourages political or social movement unionism in favour of cooperative economic arrangements between capital and labour. According to this analysis, formal employment under labour laws regulated by trade unions is the primary – if not only means – for Burmese migrants in Thailand to gain workplace power.

The FTUB has organized garment factory workers in Mae Sot to join Thai trade unions. But in 2005, when the Thai Triumph Labour Union voted on whether to accept several hundred Burmese migrants in Mae Sot as union members, members voted against the proposal. Informal reports indicate that a central consideration was the Thai union's inability to meet the needs of Burmese migrants in Mae Sot, a task that would drain the union's already-stretched resources. Another factor was the knowledge gap between union leaders and members. To address this gap, labour NGOs, including the Thai Labour Campaign, Thai trade unions and Burmese organizations, including the FTUB and the Burma Labour Solidarity Organization, organized a series of events in Mae Sot, beginning in 2004. Numerous workshops, conferences and 'fact-finding' missions brought Thai and Burmese workers and activists together to discuss mutual problems and potential cooperation. As part of these visits Thai workers have collected donations (clothing, books etc.) for Burmese schools in Mae Sot. Person-to-person contacts have increased Thai workers and trade unionists' understanding of migrants' experiences and led to a shift from decidedly anti-migrant views, to one of potential collaboration. Burmese workers in Mae Sot have benefited from exposure to trade unionism and its potential role.

But Thai and Burmese workers' solidarity and unionizing drives have since stalled. Thai unions routinely lobby the Thai government for improved labour standards for migrant workers, a measure that serves both protectionist and solidarity interests. Yet very few unions have the capacity to organize and represent potential Burmese members. Where capacity exists, it is questionable whether Thai workers wish to open the 'Thai national working class' to migrants. In the meantime, migrants continue to play a role in the FTUB's activities but are not active in democratization processes. Any potential migrant agency is subsumed in a broader strategy of regime change and bureaucratic trade union structures. It is only with the regularization of the Burmese nation-state that a role for migrants would take shape.

Yaung Chi Oo and 'informalizing' labour

The FTUB's approach and discourse avoids any significant recognition of class-based interests in Thailand, Myanmar and in democratization efforts. By contrast,

the Mae Sot-based YCO, founded in 1999 by Burmese student activists (mostly former leaders of the ABSDF) and migrant workers, adopts a very different approach.[12] YCO's goals are to improve 'working and living conditions for the Burmese migrant labourers in the Mae Sot area of Thailand' (ycowa-english.blogspot.com). Its organizational focus is protecting workers' rights, providing rights education, supporting health care, facilitating social activities, and maintaining a safe-house for migrants pursuing court cases and unable to support themselves financially. YCO is particularly active in organizing female textile and garment factory workers, whom it encourages to collaborate with each other to improve their living and working conditions. This strategy of organizing migrant labour recognizes migrants' transformative potential, and seeks to help workers exercise that power in ways that improve the social and political economic structures that frame their lives.

YCO's views on democratization and worker empowerment are clearly spelled out in relation to NGOs, which it sees as 'servicing populations' and acting as government liaisons with patronage and fundraising opportunities as a primary focus rather than community- and workplace-level struggles and decision making processes. Moe Swe, Secretary General of YCO and one of its founding members, is one such critic of NGO-style 'worker service' (Interview, 10 July 2009). He claims it is causing problems in Mae Sot, creating workers' dependency on organizations, rather than empowering workers 'to do things themselves'. This reflects Lee and Shen's (2011: 173) findings on NGOs in China, that 'rather than cultivating workers' collective power, many labour NGOs have an anti-solidarity tendency'. Moe Swe reinforces such contentions in the Mae Sot context, claiming this approach 'makes workers weaker in the end'. YCO's organizational strategy is to 'help [workers] a bit, but the primary responsibility is on the workers themselves'.[13]

YCO's approach has fostered a rapid increase in workers' actions, including widespread wildcat strikes that began in the early 2000s (Arnold 2007). In large part, these actions have been centred on compensation claims, such as back wages, unpaid overtime and the like. According to YCO, from 2002–10 they, in cooperation with the MAP Foundation and the Lawyers Council of Thailand, have assisted 2,383 workers in 157 court cases, through which a total of 11,258,143 Thai Baht (roughly US$375,000) in compensation was awarded (http://ycowa-english.blogspot.com/).[14] These activities have caught the attention of workers in the area, and also inspired other labour organizations, including the FTUB and the Labor Law Clinic, to pursue court cases.

Interviews in 2008 and 2009 indicate that workers are increasingly able to make gains when negotiating with employers, including small pay raises, compensation claims and reinstatement of unjustly dismissed workers (Arnold 2010). This is a significant improvement on conditions in the early to mid-2000s (see Arnold 2007; Pitch 2007). At that time, nearly any form of negotiation was met with dismissal and/or deportation, and physical violence and murders of activists were not uncommon (Arnold 2007). Workers can now negotiate with and even confront employers with the assistance of Burmese workers associations, and Thai and

Burmese NGOs. After several years of pressure, dialogue and confrontation, the Mae Sot Labour Protection Department is now more open to negotiations and appears less committed to acting in the interests of the employers (Arnold and Pickles 2011). These developments point to an emerging confidence among migrants that, through organizing, they can assert their desires at the workplace and broader community level. However, the extent to which migrant networks and knowledge flows constitute a class expressing collective interests is less clear, since wildcat strikes in Mae Sot have not led to formation of an industrial working class in a traditional sense. Incipient class-consciousness may be in formation, and YCO is active in building migrant centres in other parts of Thailand, but factors including a lack of sustained connections among workers delimit class-oriented politics.[15]

Although a Burmese (migrant) working class is not a necessary precondition for democratization in Myanmar, it forms a central tenet of YCO's strategy. Moe Swe of YCO affirms that his 'objective is working class unity, not ethnic unity or nationalism' (Interview, 10 July 2009).[16] Wildcat strikes and migrant knowledge networks have developed into a clear sense of migrant agency in Mae Sot. Yet this has not, as yet, translated to a class-based expression of a set of collective interests. Indeed, Burmese in Thailand are more likely to identify as migrants rather than workers, an identity that does not easily correspond to mobilizing efforts of a class-oriented organization. While migrant agency is forming in Thailand, YCO's strategies depend on class formation prior to transformative power in democratization. As a result, its class-based approach to politics is effectively in limbo.

Conclusion

In Mae Sot, a gradual shift from relative passive exploitation at work, to protest and community/cross-border organizing is taking shape. However, the challenge remains for labour, democracy and social movement organizations to find ways to meet the needs and desires of migrants on their own terms. Migrants are unlikely to gain membership in Thai unions and do not yet – and may never – fill the role of a working class or any other class with a clear set of interests reducible to 'traditional' labour movement structures 'from below'. Job and geographic mobility, combined with links to communities at home and abroad, mean that migrants do not necessarily respond to mass mobilization for democratization or other encompassing objective. Moreover, migrants have long been viewed as passive victims of Myanmar's junta, rather than active agents in ongoing processes of social and economic change (Thawnghmung 2008). This view is, however, slowly changing as migrant activism gradually takes root in Mae Sot. Wildcat strikes and court cases against employers represent a critical initial phase of engagement by marginalized workers with a diverse set of social movement actors and organizations.

Emerging migrant solidarities in Mae Sot are largely centred on workplaces and livelihood issues. However, these issues foster reflection on broader forces

that shape exploitative work. For migrants engaging political exiles the role of democracy comes to the fore in discussions, trainings and other activities. One young migrant worker participating in YCO activities in Mae Sot posed the following series of questions on expectations for democracy in Myanmar:

> Some are saying we will get democracy. If we get democracy will we have human rights? If the same government is there, will there be labour and human rights? If we have democracy will people in Burma be able to have their own homes? If there are foreign companies from Korea and other countries in Burma will there be better labour rights if Burma is a democracy? Now the government taxes taxi drivers and others, if we have democracy will it be the same?
>
> (Interview, Mae Sot, 21 November 2009)

These comments draw attention to the widely-accepted concept of democracy from above – hinged on international sanctions and regime change – which is prominent among many Burmese exiles. Yet the same migrant worker had been active in organizing at his workplace. Only a decade prior he would have almost certainly been sacked and deported for his efforts. The fact that he has not reflects a significant change in migrants' ability to exercise agency. In the past migrants were atomized. They feared 'organizations' – the exiled democracy activists – and were reluctant to press for their rights at the workplace. At present, this young man and others both organize at work and in the community and are comfortable discussing political issues with the exiles. Yet it is unclear how or if migrants continue to engage labour and social movements once workplace grievances are resolved, or when they migrate to other regions of Thailand or back to Myanmar.

Thus, the question of whether migrant workers will make the shift from workplace and community agency to play an active role in Myanmar's democratization remains open. On the one hand, the assumptions that underpin the bottom-up approach regarding the *a priori* necessity of a politicized working class restrict the role that migrants can play to one of mass-movement-in-waiting. On the other hand, the top-down approach to democratization, in which migrants' fate is linked to political leaders and their ability to achieve regime change, marginalizes migrants even further. In late 2011 and early 2012, the Burmese government increased international legitimacy for its political 'reforms' such as according legal recognition of the National League for Democracy, releasing hundreds of political prisoners, allowing formation of trade unions, and easing restrictions to information (Köhler 2012). Whether the 'new' Myanmar is a 'thinly disguised authoritarian state' (Lintner 2012) or a nation on the cusp of structural change remains to be seen. In the meantime, what is clear is that 'traditional' modes of labour organizing have failed to meet the diverse needs of Burmese migrants. Alternative models of labour activism and organizing are needed – ones that consider the strengths and limitations of workplace, class and the nation state as the 'containers' of enduring collective action.

Notes

1 Burma/Myanmar is ethnically diverse. Neither Burma nor Myanmar can accurately capture the diversity. I use both names interchangeably, noting that Burma is used by a majority of organizations and individuals interviewed in the course of research for the chapter. I am grateful for Michele Ford's insightful and thorough editing. Dae-oup Chang and Soe Lin Aung provided helpful and much appreciated comments.

2 This reflects a slowly changing view of migrants in Thailand (Arnold and Pickles 2011, Aung 2010, Campbell 2011, KHRG 2009).

3 The November 2010 parliamentary election is widely regarded as flawed. The junta's Union Solidarity and Development Party garnering over 75 per cent of the seats. Parliament convened in January 2011 and selected former Prime Minister General Thein Sein as president. The vast majority of national-level appointees named by Thein Sein are former or current military officers.

4 See Burma research and campaign websites, including: http://khrg.org/, http://rehmonnya.org/, http://www.shanwomen.org/, http://www.fdburma.org/eng/, and http://www.aappb.org/.

5 From the mid-2000s Burmese migrant worker issues have gained attention and range from research on technologies of control in maintaining low-cost, disciplined workers in a citizenship-based regime of accumulation (Pitch 2007, Arnold and Pickles 2011), analysis on state-backed borderland development initiatives and migrant workers' empowerment struggles in global supply chains (Arnold 2007, Arnold and Pickles 2011, Campbell 2011, MAP 2006), studies which document killings, extortion and sexual abuse, to labour rights abuses such as trafficking, forced labour and restrictions on organizing (Human Rights Watch 2010), and more recent emphasis on migrants' efforts to 'evade, contain and confront' state-oriented exploitative abuses (Aung 2010), and cross-ethnic labour solidarities (Campbell 2011).

6 The Democratic Voice of Burma and other organizations were formed in cooperation with the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), an umbrella group comprised of leaders of armed and exiled political organizations.

7 Many staff of organizations with international political connections are able to secure passports or residence permits from countries such as Australia and the US, enabling staff to continue their work in Thailand. Thus, citizenship-based status impacts migrant-democracy activism and organizing in Thailand, as well as migrant workers' access to social and economic rights (Arnold and Pickles 2011, Pitch 2007).

8 As part of the Asian Development Bank's strategic growth models for the Greater Mekong Subregion, Mae Sot is one of numerous 'border growth nodes' along a prominent 'economic corridor'. These are promoted to promote and enhance cross-border development (see Arnold 2010 for analysis).

9 An enterprise is considered Thai with only 10 per cent domestic share of investment.

10 As recently as the early 2000s, most factions of Thai labour were united by anti-migrant sentiment, seeing migrant workers as a threat to job security and national security.

11 One of the most high profile cases began in 1996 when FTUB, in cooperation with the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), international NGOs and US-based lawyers initiated a case against Unocal, France-based Total, senior officers of Unocal and the Burmese military for the use of forced labour in constructing the Yadana natural gas pipeline in Myanmar. FTUB's activities have garnered a strong response from the junta, for example, its English language newspaper reported that: 'Maung Maung keeps expatriate Sein Win of NCGUB as his master with a view to raising funds in the name of labour affairs. At the same time, he used the funds lavishly in launching terrorist acts and blasting bombs within the country' (New Light of Myanmar, 2006:13). These and related activities in Myanmar come with a risk – in 2009 28 FTUB members were serving prison sentences because of their trade union activities (Grumiau 2009).

12 YCO is a member of the Forum for Democracy in Burma, a coalition comprising seven exiled social and political organizations, democracy and opposition groups. In addition, it is part of the Thailand-based Action Network for Migrants and the regional Mekong Migration Network.
13 One caveat to these contentions is numerous NGOs share this strategy, including KHRG and MAP Foundation. Following Ford's (2009) example, studies on the role of NGOs in solidarity and labour movement building are needed.
14 One young man said, 'I had heard that workers won cases against their bosses, it was a kind of rumour going around among workers. I found out this was true, and now I know that it's possible to improve our work conditions' (Interview, Mae Sot, 21 November 2009).
15 YCO has caught the attention of migrant and other labour organizations in other parts of Thailand. From the mid-2000s, YCO has scaled up its Mae Sot-based activities to work in Bangkok, Surat Thani and other parts of Thailand, and has also become a model for other emerging labour organizations, including the Rohingya Labour Union (Interview, Nai Kasuauh Mon, Mon Human Rights Forum, 24 July 2009).
16 Myanmar is a highly diverse country. Ethnic armed opposition movements colour many perceptions of Myanmar, giving prominence to the divisiveness of ethnicity (Lintner 1999). See Campbell (2011) for an alternate perspective on cross-ethnic labour solidarities in Mae Sot and their implications for social change in Burma.

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7 Labour activism in Thailand

Andrew Brown and Sakdina Chatrakul Na Ayudhya

Trade unions have had legal status in Thailand for almost forty years. Yet the ideologies and practices that define trade unionism remain unknown to large swathes of the working class, and private-sector trade unions have limited capacity to represent worker interests in the workplace, at industry level or in national political arenas. The situation is better in state enterprises where a lengthy tradition of trade union organizing and activism survives. But here too unions are hardly thriving, as their energies and resources have been consumed in battles against privatization. In response to these circumstances, labour activism has been redirected through the spaces of civil society via organizational networks and forms other than trade unions. This civil society-based labour organizing has, to some extent, addressed the restrictions associated with state-sanctioned trade unionism, generating new strategies, organizational vehicles and domestic and transnational alliances. However, the capacity of these non-union organizing efforts to inject working class voices and interests into processes of workplace change and broader conflicts over the nature and direction of Thailand's social and political development has also been limited.

This chapter identifies some of the factors that account for the weak and marginalized position of trade unions in Thailand. It then discusses some of the alternative forms of labour organizing that have emerged. While recognizing the successes of non-union forms of collective activism, we also reflect on the inherent limitations of these alternative modes of collective struggle. The broader point of this exercise is to draw attention to the ways that labour activism, understood here as involving collective responses to the challenges of class, is continually being shaped and reshaped in light of changing structural contexts. This is reflected in labour's shifting organizational forms and goals as well as in the nature of the political alliances forged with other social forces. Recognizing the ways that labour movements are formed and reformed in response to changing structural circumstances is important for identifying the choices that currently face labour activists in Thailand, as they confront the task of organizing class interests in a context of continuing economic-structural change and political crisis. We begin with a discussion of the emergence of contemporary Thai trade unionism and identify some of the features associated with the character and timing of capitalist transition and political regime dynamics that have combined to constrain the

capacity of workers to build and sustain effective unions at workplace, industry and national levels.

Capitalism, regime dynamics and Thai trade unionism

If social movements are a 'collective response to challenges that negatively impact on ways of life' (Kengkij and Hewison 2009: 452), then the labour movement is arguably Thailand's oldest social movement. By the early 1920s urban workers were organizing in an effort to deal with employers and government officials and seek redress for perceived injustices in the workplace and in the wider social and political spheres. Over the following three decades, the questions as to whether, to what purpose, and through what institutional framework workers might or might not be permitted to organize constituted a recurring problem for the changing coalitions of interest struggling to shape Thailand's politics. A defining feature of the Thai experience during this period was the extent to which contending political forces were prepared to rely on repression to deny workers any legitimate space to give collective voice to their interests. However, if repression formed the dominant response, it was not the only one. Indeed, the fact of different elite responses accounts for the periodic public resurfacing of labour activism during the periods 1932–1934, 1944–1947 and 1955–1957. Each of these openings of political space proved ephemeral as new constellations of social forces, mainly led by the military, emerged to dominate the state (Brown 2004).

The well-entrenched legacy of elite hostility to labour activism predated the period of Thailand's expanded capitalist development, launched when it adopted a strategy of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) in the late 1950s. As Thai capitalism developed through the 1960s and early to mid-1970s, debates over the manner, institutional forms and degree to which labour organizing might be accommodated continued among contending political elites. These debates were shaped by the Cold War context, Thailand's expanding industrial economy and escalating levels of industrial militancy, as well as the partial unravelling of military rule and the rise of a new alliance of social forces and interests intent on cementing political control through a parliamentary regime (Brown 2004: 76–81).

What ultimately emerged from this period was the provision of opportunities for labour activism that targeted particular segments of the growing urban industrial working class, allowing for some forms of labour organizing while proscribing others. Under the terms of the 1975 Labour Relations Act (LRA), state enterprise and other urban private sector workers employed in larger manufacturing firms, concentrated in areas in and around Bangkok, were given the space to organize. This was to occur through trade unions (*sahaphapraenggnan*), labour federations (*sahaphanraenggnan*) and labour congresses (*ongkanlucang*) in a tripartite industrial relations system that cast workers, employers and government as equal partners in cooperating to solve industrial conflict and disputation. This institutional structure explicitly aimed to promote an enterprise-focused 'bread-and-butter' unionism that restricted activities to workplace economic and welfare matters. In theory, workers' broader social and political objectives would be accommodated

by their inclusion in a developing system of electoral and party politics. The provision of this political space for labour organizing was complemented by a broader social contract marked by a system of minimum wage fixing, a limited workplace compensation scheme and claims that workers would benefit from entrepreneurial-led growth via the 'trickle down' effect (Hewison 2003a).

From the late 1970s, this institutional framework for organizing working-class interests via a nationally focused enterprise-based 'bread-and-butter' trade unionism, associated social contract and system of parliamentary electoral politics has – with some notable extensions and modifications – remained largely intact. However, the provision of a formal political space where workers could organize around their grievances has not been accompanied by the greater injection of labour interests, either in processes of workplace bargaining or in the system of party and electoral politics. Rather, the trade union movement has become progressively weakened and fragmented.

In part, the problems that Thailand's working class has faced in developing and sustaining effective trade unionism are a consequence of the particular timing and character of capitalist development. The securing of a legitimate space for trade union activism occurred just prior to Thailand's entry into a period of rapid capitalist expansion and industrial growth that further transformed the productive base of society. Agriculture has remained important and continues to employ the majority of the labour force (at least in statistical terms) but manufacturing and services now dominate the economy as a result of the shift from ISI to a more export-oriented industrialization (EOI) strategy in the early 1980s. This enmeshment in global patterns of capitalist production and trade has had contradictory implications for collective labour organizing. On the one hand, the wage-labour relation has become increasingly central for sustaining livelihoods across rural and urban areas. Rapid industrialization has also created a social milieu of shared aspirations and experiences among workers, especially in the industrial heartland of Bangkok and its five surrounding provinces. On the other hand, the rapidity of change, the complexities associated with the ways that wage-labour has become entangled in livelihood calculations, the character of industrialization, especially the dominance of light industry and small-scale manufacturing firms – as well as the resort to the use of flexible employment strategies by employers, as a main response to competitive pressures – have combined to pose acute problems for trade union organizing. The existence of labour surpluses in some areas, the gendered and ethnic aspects of proletarianization and episodes of substantial capital restructuring under conditions of rapid boom up to the mid-1990s, followed by accumulation crises in 1997 and 2008, have further complicated an already difficult structural terrain for developing organizational capacities.

At the same time, these transformations have created the material and social bases upon which new forms, sites and episodes of labour activism have occurred. Thai workers have not been hapless victims of structural change, nor have they been culturally constrained when challenging their employers (cf. Lawler and Chokechai 2000). Rather, they have actively contested the terms of their subordination to the dictates and dynamics of capitalist work relations. At the level

of production, business has responded in different ways to union organizing efforts. At larger establishments and in some sectors of industry such as car manufacturing, business has permitted and even encouraged enterprise unionism, seeing unions as conducive to promoting workplace productivity. However, in Thailand's sweatshop sector, employers have systematically opposed union formation. More broadly, throughout the period under review, business has responded to periodic crises of accumulation and intensified competition by revaluing and adjusting the costs of labour. This has entailed the retrenching and downsizing of workforces, reducing wages and benefits, using flexible forms of employment, introducing new technologies, employing ever more sophisticated forms of human resource management as well as relocating operations, often to border areas or other greenfield sites, to make use of cheaper, unorganized migrant labour. Workers struggling to retain jobs, maintain conditions of employment and secure legal entitlements to compensation and outstanding wages and benefits have contested these processes of restructuring and revaluing of work. All too often, however, the outcome of these contests has been job losses, partial payment of entitlements and the destruction of already existing unions and/or the pre-emptive annihilation of nascent organizing efforts.

The nature of broader regime dynamics has facilitated business offensives against union organizing at the level of production. Connors (2009) has argued that, for all their differences, contending regime framers in Thailand, whether 'liberal', 'statist' or 'pluto-populist', have all acted to limit the political space for independent trade union organizing. This is evident in the way that successive governments have failed to reform archaic labour laws, poorly performing labour courts and the outmoded machinery of arbitration and conciliation. This has, at different times, enabled an assortment of military, bureaucratic, business and gangster interests to subvert and embed their grip over the formal institutional architecture of labour relations.[1] The inability of unions to contest power through the formal industrial relations machinery has been replicated in the system of electoral politics. Through the 1980s and 1990s the institutions of parliamentary rule and electoral politics became dominated by alliances of urban and provincial businessmen, bureaucrats, politicians and a range of 'predatory interests', known as *chao pho* or godfathers (Wingfield 2002). In a parliamentary system that has become dominated by money, vote buying and big business, labour interests have been systematically side-lined, a situation exacerbated by constitutional provisions and electoral laws that effectively disenfranchise large sections of the working class (Robertson 2001).

The demobilizing effects of structural changes on communities and workplaces, combined with continued opposition to labour organizing at the levels of workplace and regime, have placed formidable obstacles in the path of sustaining independent and autonomous trade unionism. Four decades after the mass industrial struggles that, in part, created the political space for union formation, the trade union movement is struggling to sustain its relevance. As of May 2011, total membership of all private sector unions was only 352,644, which represents a union density of something less than 4 per cent of the 9 million strong

private-sector workforce (Labour Relations Bureau 2011, see also Sakdina 2010: 4). There were a total of 1,296 registered private sector unions of which 481 were registered as 'enterprise' unions and 815 as 'industrial' unions. Perhaps as many as three-quarters of all these are 'paper unions' that have only been established as part of factional contests to secure positions within various tripartite labour relations bodies (see Conklin 2007: 15).[2] At the industry level, there are 19 Labour Federations of which only about six actually operate. At the national level, there are 13 registered Labour Councils, which are riven by factionalism and disunity, and have, at various times, been penetrated and co-opted by bureaucratic, military, business and other non-labour predatory interests. Not since the early 1980s has there been a peak labour council capable of representing labour interests effectively in national level negotiations with employer groups and governments. It is hardly coincidental that this weakening and fragmenting of the private-sector trade union movement has coincided not only with a period of significant economic growth and expansion but also a plethora of unsolved labour grievances, sporadic, although at times very public and violent industrial conflicts, as well as deepening inequality, unevenness and social polarization (Glassman 2010: 1309).

Alternative forms of labour activism

As a result of the restrictions placed on trade unions in the workplace and working class marginalization from electoral and party politics, workers' collective activism over the past two decades has often been expressed in the form of a broader social movement politics (Glassman 2004: 102). Notably, it was the feminist criticism of the hierarchical, bureaucratic and patriarchal nature of state-sanctioned trade unionism that provided early impetus to the adoption of this new strategy and direction of labour organizing.[3] Through their activism at particular workplaces and industrial districts, women workers played a key role in sustaining traditions of independent collective labour organizing, as the state-sanctioned trade unionism, and the framework within which it operated, was captured by capital and state interests (see Brown and Saowalak 2008). Drawing on ideas and resources provided by international labour solidarity groups and organized through a focus on worker rights, social justice and gender equality, women workers came to occupy a central place in a complex and dense network of alternative organizing vehicles, including labour affiliated NGOs, informal labour area groups and single-issue alliance networks.[4] Women also assumed key leadership roles in the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee (*khana kamakan samanchan raengngan thai*, TLSC), an organization established in 2001 that explicitly aimed to bring together various union as well as non-union networks of labour organizing to create a national centre that could articulate and represent working class interests in dealings with individual employers, employer associations and governments (Conklin 2007: 16).

This strategy of re-organizing through the political spaces available to civil society has addressed some of the problems associated with the marginalization of trade unions. It has produced a new generation of labour activists and leaders who

have brought new perspectives to bear on labour issues and developed expertise in testing new organizing methods, strategies and tactics. Of some significance has been the way that some of the new organizational vehicles have operated across sub-national, national and international scales and have acted as nodal links connecting previously disparate organizing and campaigning efforts. One notable example of this has been the Thai Labour Campaign (TLC) – a labour NGO that has explicitly rejected the restrictive national focus of the officially sanctioned trade union movement by linking episodes of labour activism in Thailand into regional, international and transnational labour solidarity groups and campaigning structures and networks.

It is through these non-union organizational vehicles and networks that pressure has been brought to bear on employers and governments to address problems such as workplace health and safety, reform of labour legislation and the system of tripartite industrial relations, the establishment and extension of a social security system, migrant labour, sub-contracting and a host of other issues. More broadly, it is this mix of organizational vehicles, drawing on international sources of support, that has injected working class voices and interests into the conflicts and ructions that have marked key turning points in Thailand's politics over the past 15 years – the groundswell of opposition in response to the military coup d'état of February 1991, the events of Black May 1992 and the subsequent struggle for constitutional reform, debates over Thai government and International Monetary Fund policy responses to the 1997/8 economic crisis, the mass anti-privatization demonstrations of 2003, the emergence of opposition to the Thaksin Shinawatra government that eventually led to the military coup d'état of 19 September 2006, as well as subsequent events that eventually produced the violent and bloody suppression of the Red Shirt protests in Bangkok in May 2010. Despite this, the fact remains that this broader social movement trajectory has not forced any major alteration in the relative capacities of workers to renegotiate the terms and conditions that govern their work and their access to formal political decision and policy-making processes. The long-running campaign to improve workplace health and safety clearly illustrates this point.

If there is one event that most clearly highlighted the health and safety problems confronting Thailand's industrial workforce, it was the fire at the Kader Industries (Thailand) factory on 10 May 1993, which left 188 workers dead and almost 500 injured.[5] After the fire, elements of organized labour, in alliance with a host of other civil society groups, devoted significant resources and effort toward securing compensation for victims as well as seeking improvements in health and safety laws and practices. The campaign has achieved success in some areas, but it has failed to achieve its primary objective – the establishment of an independent workplace health and safety institute where workers could participate in the development, implementation, and enforcement of policies to protect industrial workers from workplace related injuries and illnesses. The thrust of the argument for the establishment of an independent institute is that the administration of health and safety has been the responsibility of a number of state agencies working under the jurisdiction of a range of different Ministries. This has led to confusion, lack of

coordination, inefficiencies and wasted scarce resources. Activists have argued that a root cause of the problem relates to the lack of participation by workers in the development and administration of health and safety standards and legislation. But labour's detailed and nuanced plans for the health and safety institute have been repeatedly rejected by a labour bureaucracy intent on jealously guarding its power and prerogative to control the policy making process in this area. Almost two decades after the fire, poor health and safety standards continue to exact a great toll on workers, their families, and communities.

Organized labour's inability to effectively contest its political exclusion through the pursuit of a broader social movement politics can be understood at a number of different levels. For example, external funding support has been something of a double-edged sword for developing organizational capacities. While the opportunity to draw on regional and transnational networks and sources of material support has produced some notable successes (see Robertson and Somsak 2004), international solidarity assistance has also led to the creation of new sources of tensions and conflicts within the labour movement. According to Napaporn (2005: 15, 23), some of the campaigns pursued by local NGOs have reflected international donor rather than domestic interests: for example, by encouraging and supporting local activism on social clauses and codes of conduct – problems that are not viewed as having high priority by Thai workers struggling to secure a living wage or the most basic of working conditions. NGOs have sometimes also placed their need to continue to attract funds ahead of endeavours to find quick and effective solutions to local industrial disputes and problems. Meanwhile, the bureaucratization of processes of funding applications has often resulted in funds being directed to supporting endless repetition of training programmes, which have had no real impact in terms of enhancing local organizational capacities. There have also been some notable cases of corruption and misuse of funds from external providers, especially by leaders of some of the peak labour councils (Voravidh et al. 2003: 15–16, 20–1).

More broadly, the raised profile of NGOs and other non-union organizational vehicles has been the source of significant tension, generating wider debates about the appropriate demarcation and division of roles and responsibilities within the labour movement (Voravidh et al. 2003: 22–3). At the core of these debates are the delineation of appropriate roles of trade unions and NGOs and the extent to which these different organizational forms can work together to enhance workers' collective industrial and political clout. NGOs' involvement in leading industrial actions and assuming traditional trade union roles, have, in some instances, produced negative outcomes where workers involved in industrial disputation have lost their jobs (see Napaporn 2005). Activists have asserted there needs to be a much clearer understanding about the distinct roles of NGOs and unions, arguing that the task of the former is to negotiate and secure favourable outcomes for workers involved in industrial disputation. NGOs, with their international links and research capabilities, should confine their activities to offering advice and assist in the development of appropriate bargaining and campaign strategies as well as provide research that will assist unions involved in processes of collective bargaining with employers.

At another level, however, the limited successes of 'civil society' labour organizing can be traced to the inherent limitations of this strategy itself. First, in practice, the strategy has basically evolved into one of trying to extract policy concessions on particular labour problems such as casualization or labour law reform or social security. Working outside formal industrial relations institutions, the strategy has effectively seen organized labour assume the role of a lobby group prosecuting its politics on the streets – hammering on factory gates or the doors of the houses of parliament and presenting endless appeals and petitions to employers and politicians (see Sakdina 2010). For labour, this focus on single issue campaigning has come at the expense of developing a broader understanding that problems are the product of underlying structural factors that reflect the class nature of Thailand's contemporary economic and political arrangements. That is, labour activism conducted through the spaces of civil society has largely focused on the manner in which surpluses are exchanged and distributed in society in forms such as higher wages, or improved health and safety, and expanded social welfare. Less attention has been paid to investigating and challenging the ways that surpluses are actually produced in and through class processes located at the point of production itself and the crucial role played by the state in creating the conditions for the continuation of such processes.

Second, as Kengkij and Hewison (2009) have shown for Thai social movements more generally, the sometimes middle-class nature of leadership, the need for alliances, a reliance on loose organizational networks, as well as the tendency to focus on single issues, have produced a situation where elements of organized labour have adopted 'essentially anti-democratic political strategies and coalitions' (Kengkij and Hewison 2009: 454). To illustrate this second point, we focus on the involvement of state enterprise unions and the umbrella organization – the State Enterprise Relations Group (SERG) – in their changing relationship with Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai (Thai Love Thai) party over the past decade. This shifting involvement of SERG, first in supporting and then opposing Thaksin, has generated new tensions and splits within the labour movement as SERG and other labour groups have effectively found themselves in alliance with conservative military and royalist groups – social forces that have historically been opposed to labour's political agenda for greater participation and the creation of a more equitable and just society.

Thaksin and organized labour

At the level of Thailand's political regime, the Thai Rak Thai's electoral victory in 2001 marked the rise to dominance of a new coalition of pluto-populist forces dominated by big domestic capital located in the services, media, telecommunications and industrial sectors (see Connors 2009; Hewison 2010a). In the economic arena, the Thaksin government expressed a desire to free Thailand from past growth strategies that relied heavily on the export of commodities with low value-added content produced by cheap, largely unskilled, wage-labour. Instead, Thaksin's administration stressed Thailand's need for new skills, increased productivity, value

adding, industrial upgrading and the creation of a more sophisticated and globally engaged knowledge economy. Recognizing that the attainment of such objectives required long-term political stability, the Thaksin government systematically subverted the operations of independent regulatory bodies established under the 1997 Constitution, cemented its domination over parliament and electoral processes, curbed the demands of civil society groups and restricted media freedoms. At the same time, it developed a new social contract, the objective of which was to 'provide a "cushion" against social disorder [and] . . . prevent political problems destabilizing entrepreneur-led growth' and second, to 'encourage Thais to be more entrepreneurial' (Pasuk and Baker 2002: 10).[6]

Thaksin's relationship with organized labour, and especially with state enterprise unions, began in the wake of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Trade unions in both the public and private sectors allied themselves with domestic business to oppose the adoption of International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment plans, which included provisions for the privatization of state enterprises. Local business, which had previously supported privatization, felt that the timing would mean bargain prices for foreign investors, and aligned with state enterprise employees and management, NGOs and some senators in a vigorous anti-privatization campaign (Brown and Hewison 2005). The campaign became politically significant as popular opposition to selling national assets to foreigners developed. This economic nationalism subsequently became one element of the Thai Rak Thai's popular support in the 2001 elections.

Notably the Thai Rak Thai also crafted policies that appealed to those suffering from the crisis and many urban and rural workers supported the Thai Rak Thai at the ballot box (Hewison 2003a). Working class support for Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai, especially evident in the Northeast, the North and the industrial suburbs that ringed Bangkok, was consolidated as the party implemented a range of policies and programmes such as a debt moratorium for farmers, community loans and a universal health care system, an unemployment scheme and the extension of social security coverage to some informal sector workers.

Although labour activists acknowledged some of the progressive aspects of Thaksin's policies, significant elements within the labour movement began to develop an oppositional stance towards his government. State enterprise unions were especially strident in their opposition as it became clear, as economic recovery accelerated, that the Thai Rak Thai government was also intent on privatization.[7] Minor protests took place in 2001 and 2002, and by mid-2003 state enterprise unions were prosecuting a strong anti-privatization campaign. Then, in February 2004, opposition galvanized over plans to privatize the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT). Demonstrations of up to 50,000 people were maintained over several weeks, with workers asserting that the government was rushing the process without adequate legislation to protect consumers, workers and the national interest. A smaller campaign was subsequently launched against the privatization of government-owned media, where the argument revolved around issues of corruption. In both cases, the government retreated, despite support from business for its privatization policies – in the case

of EGAT, to devise a better marketing strategy to eventually convince the public and the protesters of the need for privatization.

Various elements of organized labour also opposed Thaksin's government on the grounds of its increasing authoritarianism and indifference to broader issues of labour and human rights. The largest demonstrations between 2001 and 2005, for example, brought organized labour together with a range of NGOs and civil society groups – the Assembly of the Poor, the Campaign for Popular Democracy, the Students' Federation of Thailand, the Consumers' Federation and others – on these issues. These groups continued to cooperate during the 2005 election campaign, developing a small political alliance called Green Flag that attempted to bring together groups opposing the Thai Rak Thai. In addition to opposing Free Trade Agreements and privatization, labour argued for the same concerns that had motivated workers throughout the 1990s and which remained unresolved: ratification of ILO Conventions No. 87 Concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize and No. 98 Concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organize and to Bargain Collectively, and for more attention to occupational health and safety.

State enterprise unions' opposition to privatization ultimately led them into alliances with an array of other anti-Thaksin social forces and interests, most notably the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), led by former Thaksin ally Sondhi Limthongkul. PAD's central committee was initially drawn from 22 social movement organizations, including SERG (Glassman 2010: 1315). Some labour groups – including the Thai Labour Campaign – chose not to join PAD (Pye and Shaffar 2008: 42). Although they opposed Sondhi's leadership of PAD, others – including TLSC and SERG – joined up to form part of PAD's more progressive wing. During PAD demonstrations on 26 February 2006, 5,000 state enterprise workers threatened strike action to force Thaksin to resign. Less than a month later, thousands of state enterprise workers marched from Sanam Luang to Government House (Pye and Shaffar 2008: 43). Indeed, through the events leading up to the 19 September coup of 2006, SERG and other sections of organized labour movement continued to voice their support for PAD.

SERG supported PAD through to the events of 2007 and 2008, which finally resulted in the dissolution of the government of the Thai Rak Thai's successor, the People's Power Party, and the installation of the Abhisit Vejjajiwa government, a period in which it became increasingly dominated by conservative pro-military and royalist interests.[8] Its involvement with the royalist Yellow Shirt opposition had two major implications. First, it meant that some of the leading elements of organized labour had now entered into an alliance with 'jingoistic elements of the political right' and ultimately with the forces behind the 2006 coup (Kengkij and Hewison 2009: 460). Second, it placed these labour activists and their organizations in opposition to large sections of the urban and rural working class who, because of the implementation of a raft of populist policies noted above, continued to support Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai, and its successor the People's Power Party, at the ballot box and, as events unfolded, on the streets.

Divisions within the organized labour movement caused by the involvement of some of its most important constituent groups with the political agenda of conservative royalist and military elites was further complicated by the emergence of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD), also known as the 'Red Shirt' movement (see Phakhinai 2011; Pin 2011). There is no space to chart the evolution of the Red Shirt movement from the coup of 2006 through to its violent suppression on the streets of Bangkok in May 2010 and the continued suppression of its leadership and attempted dismantling of its organizational structures and networks since.[9] Of importance here is that organized labour's pursuit of a broad social movement politics, has through its many twists and turns produced a situation where some of the strongest surviving elements of trade unionism and other civil society based organized labour groups have become directly entangled in supporting organizations of the political right. This has occurred at a time when Thailand's urban and rural working class has been galvanized into action and involved themselves in a broader popular movement that has sought restoration of an elected government that introduced policies and programmes that addressed a range of working class interest and demands.

Challenges for labour organizing

This necessarily brief reflection on labour activism in Thailand has drawn attention to ways that activism is made and remade in light of changing structural circumstances and pressures. This applies to all social movements, not just those associated with the prosecution of a working class politics. The nature and timing of Thailand's capitalist transition, associated class relations, and the current configuration of political power have combined to create an especially difficult terrain for attempts to build and sustain independent workplace-based trade unionism. In response to these circumstances, labour activism has taken forms other than trade unions and been directed toward the spaces of civil society in the shape of a broader social movement politics. This has not, however, produced any fundamental shift in working-class levels of engagement with the formal systems of participatory and representative arrangements, which remain the preserve of dominant coalitions of statist, liberal and plutocratic elites. Indeed, over the last five years some of the leading sectors of organized labour have actually found themselves in alliance with coalitions of interests which have consistently opposed working class activism and the quest for expanded political involvement – the direct consequence of the prosecution of labour activism via a social movement organizing strategy.

Although relatively little is known about the Red Shirt movement, it appears clear that the movement needs to be understood, at least partly, as a product of changes that have occurred to the structure of the working class. As mentioned earlier, Thailand's accelerated capitalist development under conditions of neoliberal globalization is having a fundamental impact on class arrangements. The relatively ethnically homogenous, spatially concentrated and securely employed public and private sector workforce that sustained collective activism in the 1970s

and 1980s has unravelled, giving way to a more casualized and informalized, mobile, spatially and industrially differentiated, dispersed and precariously employed, workforce. It is this large informalized and precariously employed segment of the working class that was the target of, and derived some real benefits from, the populist policies of Thaksin and the Thai Rak Thai.

That significant numbers of urban and rural workers have looked to – and thrown their support behind – a party of big capital to advance their interests is a development that is fraught with contradictions. However, the fact remains that it was Thaksin's TRT that succeeded in mobilizing workers behind their visions for Thailand's future development. In return for their commitment to work and their continued electoral support, Thaksin introduced policies that, to some degree, have offered workers protection from some of the vagaries of market forces, offered more efficient state services, expanded and extended social security coverage, as well as established new mechanisms through which individual workers could air their grievances and provide feedback about the delivery and effectiveness of state services (see Brown 2007).

Rank and file working class support for Thaksin, the Thai Rak Thai (now the Phua Thai party) and the complex and still evolving Red Shirt movement poses significant challenges but also opportunities for organized labour, which itself remains divided. These divisions stem not only from differences in ideology, but also by relations of patronage and personality, attitudes toward involvement in the formal tripartite industrial relations system, contrasting positions *vis-à-vis* the strategy of civil society organizing, and differing perceptions about the appropriate roles of trade unions and NGOs. Overlaying these divisions are splits between elements within organized labour, which remain allied with the Yellow side of politics while others support Red Shirt aspirations. However, there are also differences within these two broad divisions, as some organized labour groups supporting the Yellow Shirts are opposed to royalists and military interests but are driven to work with them by their hostility to Thaksin and the corruption and abuse of human rights that characterized the period of his rule. There are also emerging differences within those elements of organized labour that support some of the key objectives of the Red Shirt movement to foster greater participation and equality, but have begun to distance themselves from the elite nature of Red Shirt leadership at district, provincial and national levels.

These tensions and differences within the labour movement should not detract attention away from the passion, ingenuity and courage through which workers and activists struggle to remedy workplace problems and wider social and political injustices and indignities. However, organized labour has arrived at an important juncture that will require the development of new mobilizing tactics and strategies if it is to be able to tap into and offer effective collective representation to the diverse interests of a working class that is itself experiencing the effects of significant structural change and recomposition. In developing new strategies, trade unions and the broader network of labour NGOs and alternative labour movement vehicles might well look to the growth and evolution of the Red Shirt movement which, for all its contradictions and heterogeneity in terms of its

leadership and membership (see Hewison 2010b), embodies popular appeals for justice, dignity, participation and a more equitable distribution of the fruits of capitalist goals to which labour activism in Thailand have long aspired. It remains to be seen, however, whether organized labour can overcome ideological, theoretical, personal and other differences to develop new organizational trajectories, strategies and tactics via a renewed focus on class derived from a critical reflection on the limitations of social movement organizing, combined with a nuanced understanding of the nature and recent experiences of the Red Shirt movement.

Notes

1 Between 1975 and 1993 some estimate that as many as 10,000 trade union activists were fired by management (Conklin 2007: 16). For a broader discussion of the range of strategies that Thai employers have developed and deployed to thwart and undermine workplace trade union formation over the years since the promulgation of the 1975 LRA see Conklin (2007: 45–6).

2 A rough guide to the number of private-sector trade unions that function to represent workers' interests in processes of workplace negotiation and collective bargaining, as well as via the formal machinery of industrial conciliation and arbitration, may be gleaned from the number of registered collective agreements. In 2010 only 331 collective agreements (in a country with almost half a million industrial establishments), were officially registered with the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare (Department of Labour Protection and Social Welfare, 2010). Activists argue that this number is broadly indicative of the number of active trade unions. Contemporary trade union strength is now centred in the rapidly growing auto sector where Japanese, Korean and Western and US and other Western interests have been prepared to accept and actively cultivate enterprise-based trade unions. Enterprise-based unionism is also found in certain areas of the metals, chemicals, finance, electronics, and transport and textile and clothing sectors, although in this latter sector trade unions have become progressively weakened, especially since the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis. The strongest wing of the trade union movement is in the state enterprise sector where 44 unions claim a combined membership of almost 180,000. This represents a union density rate of just over 64 per cent. Following the military coup in February 1991 state enterprise workers were removed from coverage by the 1975 LRA, and the State Enterprise Labour Relations Act of 2000 now governs their industrial and union activities. Public servants do not have the right to form trade unions as they are excluded from coverage of the 1975 LRA.

3 By the early 1990s, 80 per cent of all workers in Thailand's ten leading export industries were female.

4 In the 1980s, workers began to organize at industrial district levels to establish union area groups, the most important of which are the Omnoi-Omyai Area Group; the Phrapadeang Area Group; the South-East Area Group; and the Saraburi Area Group. Some of the single issues networks that have emerged include the Thai Network of Patients Workplace and Environment; the Informal Workers Network; and the Network for Migrant Workers. Various labour and labour affiliated NGOs include the Arom Phongpahagnan Foundation; the Thai Labour Museum Foundation; the Foundation for Protection of AIDS Patients; the Foundation for Labour and Occupational Development; the Paisan Thawatchaianan Foundation; the Friends of Women and the Burankan Women Workers Group.

5 For further details see Brown (2001) and Haines (2005).

6 See also Hewison (2003b).

7 This paragraph and the one following draws on Brown and Hewison (2005).
8 For a detailed account of development of anti-Thaksin opposition through 2005 and 2006, which eventually led to the coup of 19 September 2006, see Askew (2010a).
9 For a useful discussion see Askew (2010b).

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8 The anti-globalization movement in the Philippines

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In November 1996, the Philippines hosted the Eighth Annual Summit of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). At least five different parallel and counter-summits were organized, including the Manila's People's Forum, the People's Conference Against Imperialist Globalization and the Asia-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Development.[1] Each reflected the approaches of different elements of the burgeoning anti-globalization movement in the Philippines and their different positions on whether to resist, reject or reform the APEC process. These, in turn, reflected the broad divisions that characterize the vibrant, yet divided, Philippine Left – which has been dominated by an internal crisis within the Communist Party of the Philippines and its National Democratic Front since 1992 and the subsequent emergence of several contending political blocs, which joined existing social democratic and other left-leaning Christian democratic parties and organizations (Caouette 2004; Quimpo 2008; Reid 2000; Weekley 2001).

In this chapter, we examine the way the anti-globalization movement in the Philippines is organized in order to highlight its rich and variegated character and the underlying tensions that exist within it. What emerges from this analysis is a picture not of a unified social movement, but of a highly segmented and fractured field of contention, divided by ideology and political affiliation. Theoretically, this chapter confirms what Della Porta and Tarrow (2005) and others have argued, namely that social movements and activists are 'reflective' social actors that constantly assess their international experiences, oftentimes resulting in the institutionalization of 'tactics and frames that appear to succeed in more than one venue' (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005: 8). However, it also shows that, if the acceleration of globalizing dynamics have generated possibilities of identifying common 'vertical' targets (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005: 10), the weaving of local concerns and issues into global or regional claims nevertheless remains contingent on domestic factors.

To untangle this rich and complex web, we concentrate our attention first on three coalitions that resist what they describe as neoliberal globalization by organizing and acting within the Philippines itself. This examination reveals that the mobilizing processes which facilitate the linking of local issues with global advocacy platforms are conditioned by issue structure and the political,

ideological and financial dynamics within and between particular coalitions of interest. We then examine two anti-globalization networks initiated by Filipinos that act on the transnational stage yet are nevertheless rooted in, and tied to, Philippines local politics. On the basis of this evidence, we argue that the structures, alliances and motivations of Philippines social movement organizations involved in the struggle against globalization are inherently local regardless of the scale at which they engage.

The emergence of the anti-globalization movement in the Philippines

Like Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, the Philippines has become increasingly integrated (albeit less successfully than its neighbours) into the global economy through a model of rapid economic growth fuelled by export-oriented industries and economic and financial liberalization (Bello, Docena, de Guzman and Malig 2005; Fouquin 1999). In the process, its economy has become linked to global players, in particular multinational firms (Andrews, Chompusri and Baldwin 2003) – as demonstrated by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, which saw its currency devalued and economic growth slow, although to a lesser extent than many other countries in the region.

As we have suggested in previous work (Caouette 2006, 2009; Tadem 2009a), as well as being a response to the social and political processes associated with globalization, transnational opposition to globalization emerged in Southeast Asia as a consequence of limited political liberalization.[2] Anti-globalization organizations tend to establish themselves in countries with significant exposure to the global economy and where sufficient political space exists for local, regional or global organizing. The Philippines, Thailand, and increasingly Indonesia, host various transnational activist organizations, a trend that accelerated after the Asian Financial Crisis (Loh 2004). Since that time, Bangkok, Manila and Jakarta have become 'nodes of transnational activism'; places that 'provide not only the practical infrastructure required by transnational [non-governmental organization (NGO)] networks, but also a political climate that is not too hostile toward civil society activism' (Piper and Uhlin 2004: 14). Of these three, Manila is the key centre from which various networks have emerged. Indeed, the Philippines, with its relatively open political space since the mid-1990s, broad range of civil society organizations, large NGO movement and concentration of organizations intervening in the realm of ideas, knowledge production and alternative discourse, has rapidly become a hub of resistance to globalization.

Internationally, the anti-globalization movement gained momentum with the rapid growth of anti-trade liberalization sentiment, particularly after the failure of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations and the launching of the Ministerial Meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The movement was given a major boost by the 1999 Battle in Seattle, when protestors from all over the world gathered, angry that they have been locked out of the WTO's decision-making processes (Levi and Olson 2000;

Pleyers 2011). Other anti-WTO protest actions followed in Prague, Genoa and Milan among others. In Southeast Asia, the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis reinforced the questioning of the soundness of the neoliberal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

Within the Philippines itself, a major domestic factor in the growth of opposition to globalization has been the framing of local economic problems (socio-economic disparities, unemployment, urban and rural poverty) within a critique of the government's longstanding commitment to neoliberal macro-level policies (Bello et al. 2005). Under the Marcos dictatorship (1972–86), neoliberalism was mainly advocated by technocrats eager to toe the line of the IMF and the World Bank (Broad 1988; Wurfel 1988). During the post-martial law period, neoliberal ideology continued to dominate the political leadership. Corazon Aquino (1986–92) continued to follow the advice of the technocrats, who cautioned her on the risks of failing to pay debt accrued under the Marcos regime. Under the Ramos Administration (1992–98), the president himself launched the Philippines 2000 policy, which favoured deregulation, privatization and liberalization – a policy supported not only by government officials and the business communities, but even by some NGOs identified with the Philippines Left, which believed that neoliberalism offered a viable alternative to the failed socialist policies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Tadem 2002: 93). Joseph Estrada (1998–2001), despite campaigning on the slogan of Erap for the Poor (*Erap para sa Masa*), continued to hire technocrats who carried out the neoliberal economic agenda.[3] His successor, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001–11), was strongly in favour of joining the WTO and participating in the ensuing process of liberalization (Quinsaat 2006a: 14).

Roots of the contemporary anti-globalization movement can be traced to the Marcos era. A few years after the declaration of Martial Law, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA), and its united front, the National Democratic Front (NDF), began challenging the policies of the IMF and the World Bank. These two multilateral financial institutions (MFIs), which were condemned by activists for providing the loans needed by the dictatorship to prop up its regime (Hawes 1987; Timberman 1991), were very much targets – along with US military bases – of the anti-dictatorship campaign (Chapman 1987; Jones 1989; Pimentel 1991). A fully-blown movement subsequently emerged with the advent of People Power in 1986, when the Left's critique of economic globalization sharpened in response to the US$56 billion debt incurred by the Marcos regime, which was perceived not only to be a consequence of corruption, but also as the product of the failure of IMF and World Bank policies, which had encouraged the opening up of the local market to the global economy. MFIs were thus no longer seen just as an adjunct to US domination, but as oppressors in their own right.

In the sections that follow, we examine specific issues and forms of resistance to economic liberalism, with a focus on how these campaigns connect with, and are inserted into, an anti-globalization collective action frame. This examination reveals how local dynamics within and between particular coalitions, and the

nature of the particular issues pursued, explain the shape and evolution of these campaigns.

International debt, fair trade and international trade agreements

1988 saw the emergence of the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), a broad coalition of NGOs identified with the CPP and other Left formations as well as with members of the business community. The FDC's agenda – which called for a moratorium on foreign debt service payments; disengagement from loans that did not benefit the people; and a cap on foreign-debt service payments of 10 per cent of export earnings (Tadem 2009b; also Ariate and Molmisa 2009) – represented a moderation of the protest agenda, as it shifted from debt repudiation to a cap on debt repayment. Its emergence marked the beginning of the redefinition of the Left agenda against the IMF/World Bank paradigm in a period of democratic transition, reflecting, in part, diverging interpretations of what might be the most appropriate stand to take towards the new regime (Rocamora 1994; Caouette 2004).

Several individuals and national NGOs were already involved in international networks including the Transnational Institute (TNI) and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), while others had played a coordinating role, as was the case with Jubilee South (Ghimire 2011: 52). Yet, although it was first conceived as a local debt coalition, the FDC quickly emerged as a key transnational actor as a result of its capacity to organize national and global networks around the debt issue. It subsequently became a major player on the transnational stage, taking a lead role in the formation of the Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (Ariate and Molmisa: 2009) and taking advantage of opportunities created by IMF initiatives, such as the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) in 1996.

A second example of how local issues were framed, connected and inserted into a global alternative to neoliberal economic policies is the fair trade movement, which advocates the development of safety nets for small producers adversely affected by liberalized trade. The Philippines fair trade movement experienced a similar but distinct trajectory to that of the anti-debt movement. Initially sparked by the activities of a group of Japanese NGOs that coalesced around the Japan Committee for Negros Campaign (JCNC), the coalition developed a campaign against hunger in the sugar-producing Negros Island in the mid-1980s and supported the development of alternative trading networks, for example, for *muscovado* sugar (partly refined brown sugar with a taste of molasses) and Balangon bananas. These initiatives led to the creation of the Alter Trade Corporation (ATC), a joint initiative of the JCNC and local NGOs identified with the national democratic Left, which sought to encourage people-to-people trade between Japanese consumers and displaced sugar plantation workers.

The concept of fair trade rapidly captured the imagination of activists beyond Negros. On a neighbouring island, the Panay Fair Trade Center and the Advocate of Philippine Fair Trade Inc. were developed based on the example of a Northern fair trade initiative called the Alternative Trading Organization (Cabilo 2009:

143–4). By 2001, the Philippine Fair Trade Forum (PFTF) had emerged with support from Oxfam-Great Britain. Launched formally in 2002, PFTF sought to develop domestic and international markets for small producers and to contribute to international debates around fair trade initiatives such as the labelling of fair trade products (Cabilo 2009: 147). The PFTF maintains close links with its partners in the North, including Oxfam-Great Britain, Oxfam-Belgium, Traidcraft UK and Solidare Monda among others. European fair traders have also played a crucial role in the establishment of individual organizations (Cabilo 2009: 144, 147).

A third example is the Stop the New Round Coalition (SNR), which was established in the post-Marcos era. Although it is similar to the FDC in the sense that it is a broad coalition led by leftist political blocs (Quinsaat 2009), SNR focuses specifically on the World Trade Organization. Its activities have fed into the international campaign against trade liberalization in the Philippines, which focused on widespread concerns about the impact of the WTO framework on the agricultural sector, a concern shared by transnational campaign networks (Ghimire 2011: 52).

However, unlike the FDC, which was a local coalition that went global, or the fair trade movement, which developed through bilateral cooperation, SNR was formed as part of a global response to the post-Doha negotiations, with the initial aim of forcing the Philippine government to break the consensus of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun (Quinsaat 2006b, 2009). Thus, whereas the FDC and the fair trade movement constitute examples of global framing, SNR represents what Tarrow (2005: 79–80) has described as the internalization of global contention.[4] As argued below, however, the different mechanisms that led to the transnationalization of protest in these three instances have not been as influential for their subsequent development as local power dynamics and ideological tensions within the Philippine Left.

Domestic political dynamics and contention

A detailed analysis of the evolution of the FDC, the fair trade movement and SNR reveal that all three were affected by the split in the mainstream Left movement in 1992, albeit to varying degrees. To understand the impact of the split on these movements, it is necessary to first understand the 1992 split in the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The establishment of the CPP in 1968 and the protracted people's war led by the NPA provided the overarching structure for collective action during the Marcos Dictatorship (1972–86). During the last part of that era, the CPP supported the formation of a large number of legal and sectoral organizations as part of its effort to establish a large united front. These organizations eventually came to dominate and capture most collective action initiatives. In the process, a whole generation of social movement activists emerged, which subsequently became responsible for a wide array of social movement organizations, including those concerned with neoliberal globalization.

The early post-Marcos period witnessed a further multiplication in the number of formally-constituted organizations, many of them NGOs. Funds brought in by

these NGOs created patron–client relations with mass movement organizations, which relied on NGO support for their mobilizing work. Mass movement organizations experienced something of a crisis in human resources as a result of this development, since the rapidly expanding NGO sector recruited cadres involved in mass organizing to manage their projects and prepare their reports. However, more subtle changes also occurred as a result of this shift. While leading cadres continued to operate clandestinely, party members working within NGOs and other legally-recognized organizations developed a different understanding of political reality, which gradually led them to feel that the party leadership had lost touch.[5] This tendency became more pronounced when these activists began to question the Party leadership's capacity to provide adequate strategic direction. In response, within the three years from 1989 to 1992, the revolutionary movement swung from pluralist explorations to renewed orthodoxy. As a consequence, starting in 1992, the CPP began fragmenting into a series of small political blocs (the Rejectionists) leaving its Maoist orthodox core (the Reaffirmists) exposed but determined to fight back.

The FDC was adversely affected with the split in the CPP-NPA-NDF. In the case of the FDC, when the New Patriotic Alliance (Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, BAYAN) split, the break-away faction, known as the Upholder of People's Power and Democracy (Sandigan ng Lakas at Demokrasya ng Sambayanan, SANLAKAS) joined the FDC in its own right, causing BAYAN and its allied organizations to eventually leave the coalition (Tadem 2009b: 233). The fair trade movement was also affected by these tensions. After the split, members of the NPA torched a truck belonging to the Bacolod City-based Alter Trade Corporation (ATC) for refusing to pay PHP30 million in 'revolutionary tax' (Ubac 206: 1). Both organizations were also affected by disagreements over strategy. In late 2000 and early 2001, the FDC was paralyzed when it split into pro- and anti-Estrada camps with the emergence of the oust-President Estrada movement, which eventually led to Estrada's removal. The fair trade movement has been debilitated by debate among its members about whether to concentrate on economic concerns (improving profit) or on the political aspects of alliance-building at the local and global levels. Meanwhile, the membership of SNR, which was formed in 10 October 2002 after the split, is limited to Left political blocs identified with the 'RJ' faction such as AKBAYAN Citizens' Action Party, and SANLAKAS.

A second important influence on these coalitions was the extent and nature of their engagement of the elites during the post-martial law period. Under the Aquino Administration, they gained support from members of the Cabinet and the Philippine Congress from the progressive movement, as well as from independently minded legislators who could identify, for example, with the debt issue. Anti-globalization activists also benefited from the emergence of a number of 'reformist technocrats', who were open to the views of civil society players concerning the adverse effects of neoliberalism. One example is the Department of Agriculture's Undersecretary and WTO chief negotiator Segfredo Serrano, who brought civil society players into the Task Force on the WTO Agreement on Agriculture Renegotiations (TF WAAR, later TF-WAR), a multi-sectoral consultative body tasked with considering, developing,

evaluating and making recommendations on Philippine negotiating positions and strategies on agriculture.

TF-WAR's members included leftist groups such as the Blood Compact of the National Movement of Peasant Farmers (Sanduguan Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka) identified with the old Communist Party of the Philippines, with peasant leader Jaime Tadeo of the Democratic Peasant Movement of the Philippines (demokratikong Kilusang ng Mangbubukid ng Pilipinas, dKMP) and with social democratic groups such as the Caucus of Development NGOs, as well as organizations like Philippine Business for Social Progress and industry organizations such as the Philippine Sugar Millers Association. Through TF-WAR, anti-globalization activists could play a role in WTO negotiations (Quinsaat and Tadem 2008). And although Serrano stipulated that taskforce members could not 'junk the WTO' (Interview with Philippine trade negotiator, 1 February, 2008), this did not prevent its members from participating in protest actions during WTO negotiations, as was seen in the Fifth WTO Ministerial meeting in Hong Kong in 2005.

In terms of wider engagement in the domestic political arena, the issues championed by the FDC and SNR also had considerable resonance with policy-makers. The FDC had more allies in government than the fair trade movement, arguably because fair trade had far less status as a national issue than national debt but also because the fair trade movement was dominated by community groups rather than national organizations. In the case of SNR, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the lead agency for the country's WTO negotiations, had no interest in entering into dialogue (Cabilo 2006: 100). However, SNR was able to make headway in the House of Representatives, where it worked on parliamentarians to put together House Resolution 122, which sought to establish an inquiry into the status of negotiations in the lead-up to the Cancun Ministerial meeting on September 2003 and obtained seats in government and *ad hoc* consultative bodies like TF-WAR, which made them privy to the Philippine Negotiating Strategy on Agriculture (Tadem 2009c).

At the transnational level, the FDC, SNR and the fair trade movement all benefited from the changing nature of the external environment, which witnessed the emergence of very different transborder relations (Kothari 2002: 231). Their engagement in transnational alliances was not, however, even. Unlike the FDC and SNR, which made quite 'radical' calls for a debt moratorium and the stoppage of WTO negotiations respectively, fair trade advocacy was more 'reformist' in nature, emphasizing the need for safety nets and strategies to assist disadvantaged small- and medium-sized enterprises to compete with multinational corporations rather than big-picture changes in the international trade regime. As a result of these different emphases, transnational alliances entered into by the FDC and SNR were broader and more numerous than the transnational alliances of organizations advocating for fair trade.

Similarly, while these coalitions have all benefited from foreign funding, which has enabled them to pursue their anti-globalization agendas, their access to foreign financial support has varied. The FDC has received funding for its advocacy activities from NGOs based in Australia, Canada, Germany and the

Netherlands, such as from the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign (AFFHC) and Christian Aid (Tadem 2009a). SNR has been supported by the Canadian Catholic Church and the Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement in Belgium (known as the 11.11.11), among others (Quinsaat 2009: 92). Oxfam, the Coalition of the Flemish North South Movement in Belgium, and the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand, NOVIB) have also funded the FDC, SNR and the fair trade movement (Ariate 2006: 18).[6]

In short, anti-globalization coalitions in the Philippines have pursued their objectives and aims by linking their local agendas with that of transnational social movements that shared their concerns. In the case of the fair trade movement, the growth of anti-globalization movements worldwide generated a willingness on the part of international donors to support these local campaigns. Similarly, SNR's experience has shown that opportunity structures for local organizations are not confined to the level of the nation-state. Thus while the national context structured and influenced the specific contours of each of these networks, the global arena offered the possibility of international financial support, a range of allies and multiple opportunities to travel and establish connections, but also a syntax of political advocacy and research materials (and protocols) that could be replicated and applied to the Philippines.

Philippine transnational networks

The previous section examined how national coalitions emerged gradually in the 1990s as part of the anti-globalization movement. These developed in the specific domestic political conditions and opportunities that marked the Philippine context while linking with, and participating in, global coalitions and initiatives such as No to WTO, Our World is not for Sale, Fair Trade Organization, Fair Trade Labelling Organizations International, Jubilee South, and the Asian Campaign on Debt and Structural Adjustment.

Another dimension of the anti-globalization movement in the Philippines involves the many Philippines-based organizations that act at the regional level in order to engage in transnational organizing. Focus on the Global South (FOCUS) and the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) have been key regional networks that have provided a reference point for alternative knowledge and discourse in the 1990s. In Southeast Asia, they have been important components of the anti-globalization movement because of their contribution to analysis and knowledge building around global financial architecture, world trade, food sovereignty, multilateral institutions and regional governance. However, as the discussion below reveals, while these two organizations seek to act primarily at the regional and global level, their conception and establishment are very much linked to the Philippines context.

Focus on the Global South

Initially conceived between 1993 and 1994 by Walden Bello and Kamal Malhotra, two long-time development and political activists,[7] the transnational research and

policy advocacy organization FOCUS was officially established in Bangkok in January 1995. At the time, Bello and Malhotra shared a common set of ideas and beliefs about global economic neoliberalism, most notably that it was important to go beyond the existing North–South paradigm. Moreover, both were sceptical of mainstream economic analyses and thought that it was essential to strengthen the linkages between micro projects and initiatives and macro perspectives on resistance to globalization. They were also convinced of the need to equip social movements, grassroots organizations and NGOs with up-to-date and alternative scholarly analyses.

Importantly, Bello and Malhotra believed that the Asian geopolitical region constituted an emerging and dynamic socio-economic and political space that embodied the contradictory and often complex impacts of economic globalization. In defining the idea of a Global South, they engaged in conceptual framing offering an innovative and credible alternative perspective to the traditional North–South metaphor (Thérien 1999) that distinguished between 'those who are economically able to participate in and benefit from globalized markets and those who are excluded and marginalized from them' (Kaewhtep 1999: 45–6). Thailand's relative political stability and democratic space, and the possibility of being associated with the Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute (CUSRI), were two key factors why the FOCUS head office was established in Bangkok. Beginning with a small staff (there were only six in 1996), the FOCUS team expanded rapidly: in 1999, it had already close to 20 staff and more than 25 by 2005, having by then established two national offices, one in India and one in the Philippines.

The rapid expansion of FOCUS is explained by both the skills of its staff and the peculiar international and regional context of the late 1990s. The first group of factors are endogenous and have to do with the capacity of FOCUS to build strong, cross-scalar networks of civil society organizations (Sta. Ana 1999: 6). Soon after it was formed, FOCUS established itself as a force to be reckoned with, its staff playing a central role in organizing civil society networks within the region around a range of issues such as food security, but also in fostering parallel forums and counter summits to regional economic integration and organizations, among others, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). FOCUS has also been closely involved in many global alliances, such as the World Social Forum, anti-WTO coalitions (for example, the Our World is Not for Sale campaign) and the peace movement (Banpasirichote, Singh and Van der Borght 2002: 2).

The second group of factors are exogenous and contingent upon a specific set of circumstances: when the Asian Financial Crisis began in Thailand, the staff of FOCUS were in high demand for their analyses of the impact of the crisis and the role of the international financial institutions in it (Sta. Ana 1999: 24). In more recent years, the issue of peace and the opposition to US foreign policy has become a key area of research and advocacy for FOCUS, in addition to its networking efforts. In the wake of the US-led invasion of Iraq, FOCUS played a central role in convening a large peace conference in Jakarta, which produced the

Jakarta Peace Consensus. As at the time of the Asian Financial Crisis and in the context of the anti-WTO movement, FOCUS's expertise in networking and capacity to produce well-informed policy documents placed the organization at the centre of several transnational coalitions.

In the Philippines, the FOCUS national programme office assisted local organizations to scale up their anti-neoliberal advocacy, including the FDC and SNR, even providing space for SNR's secretariat (Tadem 2009b: 237). As a member of SNR, FOCUS was very much active in protests during the 1996 Leaders' Summit of APEC in the Philippines as a member of the Philippine Hosting Committee-Manila People's Forum on APEC (MPFA).[8] It also took a leading role in SNR's responses to governance and macroeconomic issues, together with Action for Economic Reform and the FDC. Moreover, its connections and contacts with other transnational networks and international funding agencies constituted an important resource in the Philippines, as demonstrated in Figure 8.1, which shows the cross-scalar links between FOCUS and the FDC,[9] as did its research and policy analysis. In many ways, then, FOCUS acted as a popular education think tank and as an interpreter of global syntax of transnational advocacy, as well as an intermediary.

Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN)

Established a few years later in 1998, the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) was the result of a two-year process of consultation and exchange of materials among organizations from the Asia Pacific region involved in research and documentation. These organizations shared an interest in building activists' research capacity and in establishing data banking facilities designed to help local activists develop common research strategies and to support social movements concerned with global and regional institutions, such as the WTO, the IMF and APEC (APRN 1999: 3). APRN's first Annual Conference, organized around the theme of trade liberalization, brought together 85 individuals from 50 organizations located in 11 different countries, including 10 of the network's 17 founding organizations (CI-ROAP 1999). During and after the Conference, other common research areas were further identified for the network, namely, government transparency; the impact of globalization on workers' rights and labour migration; the impact of globalization on food security; and, finally, the impact of the GATT-agreement on agriculture (APRN 1999: 4). APRN has since expanded to over 50 members based in 19 different countries (APRN 2011).

Like FOCUS, the presence of key individuals skilled at organizing networks, coordinating processes and seeking financial assistance, coupled with the growing intensity of economic integration and financial liberalization, contributed to the rapid expansion of APRN. Through a grant from a Canada-based NGO, it established a small secretariat located in the IBON office in Manila, which took responsibility for communications among network members, the development and maintenance of a website and a listserv, and the coordination of the publication of the *APRN Journal* (APRN 2000: 1).[10] APRN has also continued to organize annual conferences co-hosted by at least one APRN member. From 2004, these

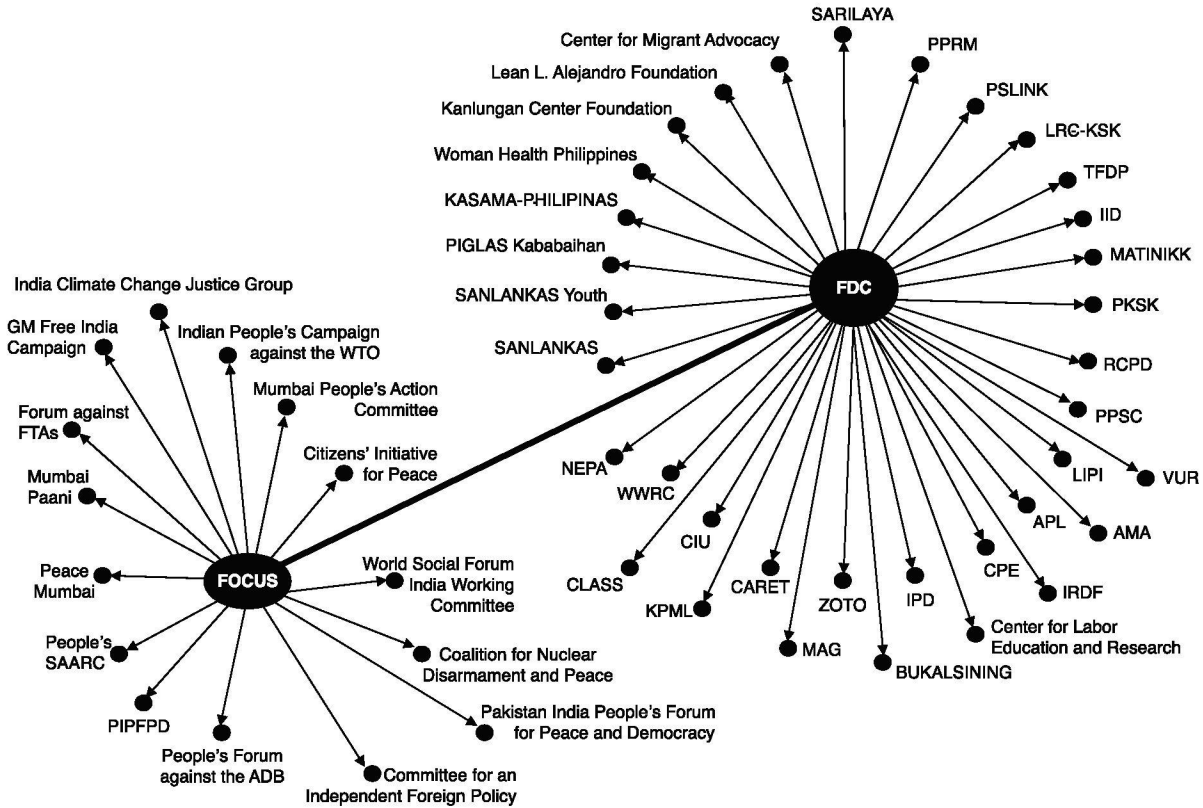

Figure 8.1 Cross-scalar linkages between FOCUS and the FDC.

meetings were opened up to non research-based people's organizations (APRN 2004: 1). It also finances coordinated research projects involving multiple network members (APRN 2001).

In recent years, APRN members have participated in the formation of the Reality of Aid-Asia network, an Asian counterpart to the Reality of Aid network, which monitors and documents international development assistance programmes and projects. They have also continued to engage in global and regional activities, such as the international conference to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Bandung Conference (April 2005); in a range of consultations and parallel forums on ASEAN and the WTO; and more recently in activities around climate change and natural resources and free trade agreements (APRN 2008). With its expanding membership and its centrality in various transnational networks, APRN has scaled up many of the approaches and methods initially developed by IBON. Indeed, APRN's evolution is an illuminating case of what Tarrow (2005: 99–106) describes as transnational diffusion.

Common strategies, parallel orbits

In many ways, FOCUS and APRN are similar, in that their capacity to simultaneously maintain direct contacts with social movement organizations operating at the national scale in the Philippines and their own transnational allies, including Northern funding agencies, has enabled both networks to occupy a key position within the Philippines anti-globalization movement despite their primarily transnational focus. At the heart of this capacity, along with their organizing and networking skills and access to financial resources, has been their emphasis on analysis and research – a brokering capacity that has resulted in the gradual broadening of both organizations' agendas beyond particular global trade issues to encompass official development assistance, peace and climate change. By making global processes legible (i.e. engaging a form of translation and interpretation), both networks act as bridges, facilitating the creation of linkages across social movements. In the case of FOCUS, this has involved giving grassroots social movement organizations access to international networks and facilitating opportunities for them to participate in international forums (Banpasirichote et al. 2002: 3). APRN's capacity to link local struggles to global advocacy operates rather differently, reflecting its particular niche – working to strengthen the capacity of people's organizations in the area of documentation and research.

The shared *modus operandi* of these two networks highlights a key distinction to be made while discussing the anti-globalization in the Philippines – that is, the scale at which organizations act and mobilize. In contrast to local organizations and national coalitions that resist and oppose neoliberal globalization (the FDC, fair trade network and SNR) through mobilizing and acting within national boundaries, the primary focus of these Philippines-based and Philippines-dominated networks sits at the transnational level.

For locally-focused organizations, political dynamics within the Philippines, including links and alliances within political elites, are central. Local power

dynamics clearly matter less for these transnationally-focused organizations, which are partly detached from day-to-day in-fighting and rivalry within the Philippines Left. In addition, the political responses of the transnational networks are in part mediated by the need to exhibit the degree of flexibility in working together in global coalitions and platforms demanded by their donors and international allies. They have not, however, broken entirely free of their local roots. Both FOCUS and APRN members have participated in transnational coalitions such as the Our World is Not for Sale (OWINFS), the World Social Forum and the Hong Kong People's Alliance (HKPA), which was organized in 2005 as a counter summit to the WTO Ministerial meeting (Figure 8.2). However, in the Philippines, the organizations operate in different circles. The APRN draws its membership from the Reaffirmists. As a result, it has no links with either the FDC or SNR, whose members are drawn from the Rejectionists, the group that had split from the CPP. This apparently paradoxical situation reminds us that although local specificities become less consequential as contention moves up into global scale, this process in fact generates a false sense of national cohesion that hides the dense fabric of tense and difficult relations and dynamics at 'home'.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the process of adaptation and institutionalization that has taken place within the anti-globalization movement in the Philippines. As our analysis shows, not only does collective action occur at different scales but each mobilizing space comes with its own dynamics and processes, which are embedded in specific and particular sets of relations. The acceleration of globalizing processes has indeed generated common 'vertical' targets (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005: 10). Yet, Philippines anti-globalization activists remain profoundly rooted in local and national power dynamics structured by political elites and ideological tensions. Indeed, that local context provides an equally necessary analytical lens in explaining and accounting for the particular configuration of the Philippine anti-globalization movement. Once this multi-scalar approach is adopted, it becomes possible to reconcile the fact that organizations such as FOCUS and APRN, while belonging to different and opposed political factions in the Philippines, could be part of the same transnational coalitions. Equally, it explains why organizations that are part of the same transnational networks choose to compete and frustrate each other's initiatives at the local level.

But to what extent, then, does economic globalization act as an emerging and expanding scale of social and political contention? The cases presented here remind us of the extent to which struggles against globalization remain local when experienced and expressed in local spaces. Unsurprisingly, government officials, political elites and economic oligarchs have become targets of the anti-globalization movement, which has necessarily intertwined local and international campaigns to achieve its objectives. At the same time, openings in international institutions and cross-border issues (such as climate change, trade liberalization or

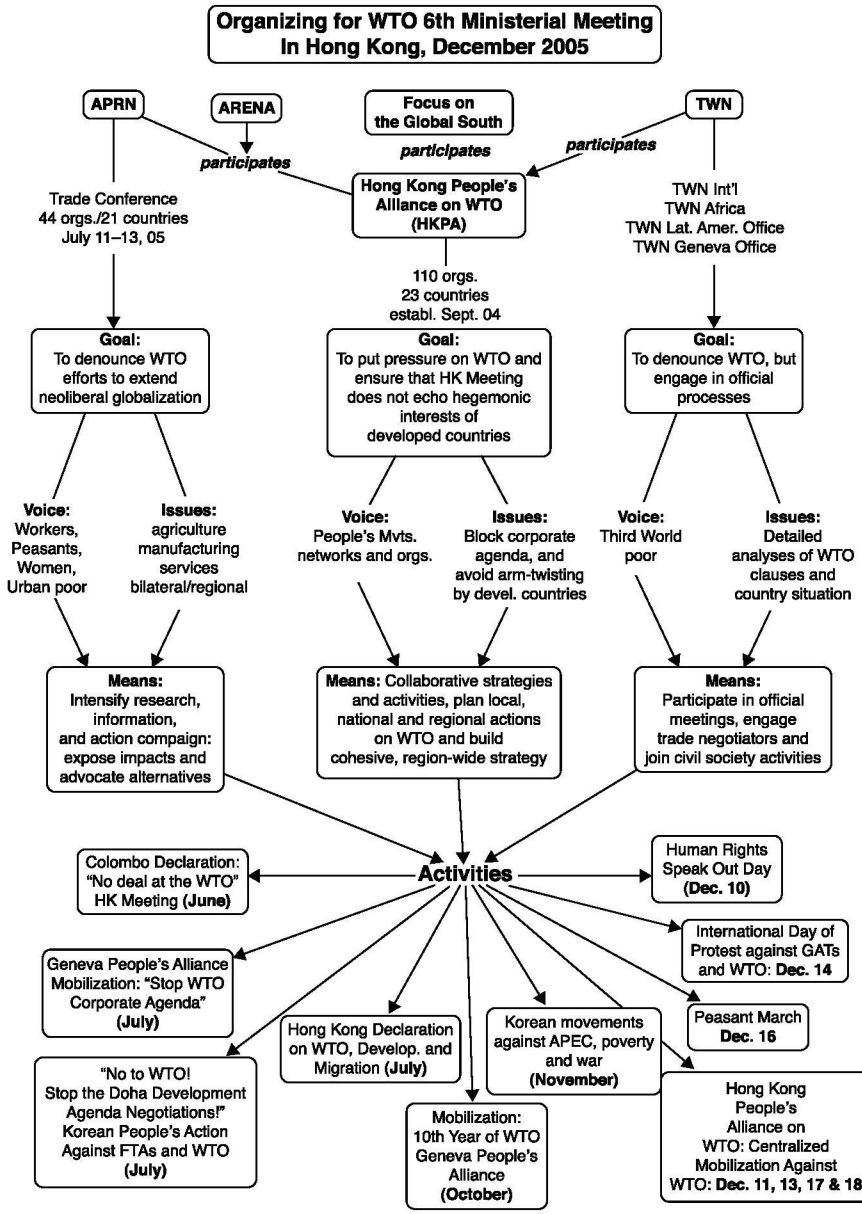
Organizing for WTO 6th Ministerial Meeting
In Hong Kong, December 2005
APRN
ARENA
Focus on the Global South
TWN
participates
participates
participates
Hong Kong People's Alliance on WTO (HKPA)
Trade Conference
44 orgs./21 countries
July 11–13, 05
110 orgs.
23 countries
establ. Sept. 04
TWN Int'l
TWN Africa
TWN Lat. Amer. Office
TWN Geneva Office
Goal:
To denounce WTO efforts to extend neoliberal globalization
Goal:
To put pressure on WTO and ensure that HK Meeting does not echo hegemonic interests of developed countries
Goal:
To denounce WTO, but engage in official processes
Voice:
Workers, Peasants, Women, Urban poor
Issues:
agriculture manufacturing services bilateral/regional
Voice:
People's Mvts. networks and orgs.
Issues:
Block corporate agenda, and avoid arm-twisting by devel. countries
Voice:
Third World poor
Issues:
Detailed analyses of WTO clauses and country situation
Means:
Intensify research, information, and action compaign: expose impacts and advocate alternatives
Means: Collaborative strategies and activities, plan local, national and regional actions on WTO and build cohesive, region-wide strategy
Means:
Participate in official meetings, engage trade negotiators and join civil society activities
Activities
Colombo Declaration: "No deal at the WTO" HK Meeting (June)
Human Rights Speak Out Day (Dec. 10)
International Day of Protest against GATs and WTO: Dec. 14
Geneva People's Alliance Mobilization: "Stop WTO Corporate Agenda" (July)
Hong Kong Declaration on WTO, Develop. and Migration (July)
Korean movements against APEC, poverty and war (November)
Peasant March Dec. 16
"No to WTO! Stop the Doha Development Agenda Negotiations!" Korean People's Action Against FTAs and WTO (July)
Mobilization: 10th Year of WTO Geneva People's Alliance (October)
Hong Kong People's Alliance on WTO: Centralized Mobilization Against WTO: Dec. 11, 13, 17 & 18

Figure 8.2 Parallel activities at the Hong Kong WTO Meeting.

economic integration) offer a range of assets for activists: access to new resources, opportunities to acquire new sets of skills and a new militant syntax. Equally importantly, transnational networks offer the possibility of accessing allies within global civil society organizations in order to exert pressure from above. But while there are significant instances of cross-border organizing and transnational contention, proximities and localism are very much at work within the anti-globalization movement.

The case studies examined here offer vivid examples of the extent to which global targets have been embraced by local movements, and of the strategic advantages that international networks can provide. The anti-debt relief movement, the movement to change trade rules and regulations and the fair trade movement all work at both the local and global levels, often simultaneously. On the one hand, pressure by these coalitions on the Philippines state has fed into pressure on multilateral financial institutions, on issues such as debt (in the case of the FDC), the WTO (in the case of SNR), and fair trade (in the case of the PFTF). On the other hand, these organizations' participation in transnational social movements heightens the pressure they can exert locally. SNR's local anti-WTO campaigns, for example, were given impetus by an international campaign against the WTO, as were those of the fair trade movement, which continues to be nurtured by its transnational fair trade alliances. Ironically, however, as the discussion of FOCUS and APRN has confirmed, the strongest characteristic of the landscape of anti-globalization resistance in the Philippines is not its engagement with global networks and global campaigns. It is, in fact, that it is very much 'pinoy' (Filipino), both in its dynamics when dealing with political elites and in its political and ideological divisions and divides.

Notes

1 Starting in 1993, parallel events were organized to challenge APEC and its project of creating a trans-Pacific free trade area. Initially modest and limited to individuals, social movements and NGOs, these parallel forums multiplied and expanded after the Jakarta summit in 1994. As the opposition to APEC grew, so did the range and forms of resistance.
2 See also Loh Kok Wah and Öjendal (2005).
3 Erap is the moniker of President Joseph Estrada. It comes from the word 'pare' (the shortened form of the word *kompare*, which means 'godfather') spelled backward.
4 Tarrow defines internationalization as 'the migration of international pressure and conflicts into domestic politics and the triangular relationship that this creates among ordinary people, their governments, and international institutions' (Tarrow 2005: 80), whereas global framing 'is the use of external symbols to orient local or national claims' (Tarrow 2005: 60).
5 The same could be said about those who were part of the anti-dictatorship movement, such as members of other Left movements, professionals and members of the business community, a number of whom were now brought into government (Boudreau 2001; Hedman 2005).
6 A drawback with foreign funding, as seen in the experience of the fair trade movement, stems from the differing perspectives among donor NGOs. Alter Trade Japan (ATJ), for example, views fair trade as being concerned more with trading existing products of

Southern producers and interacts primarily with Alternative Trading Organizations or their representatives (Cabilo 2009). Others view fair trade as one segment of the larger alternative trade project that includes, among other things, initiatives of the fair trade movement, sustainable agriculture and organic farming movement and the environmental movement (Ostertag 2001).

7 Bello, a Filipino political economist trained in the US, had been very active there against the Marcos dictatorship and the US bases in the Philippines while contributing to a Northern NGO, the Institute for Food and Development Policy (Food First) while Malhotra from India had been involved for years with Community Aid Abroad (Oxfam Australia) and many other local Indian NGOs.

8 The MPFA developed out of NGO forums held in parallel with the 1994 APEC Leader's Conference in Bogor (Indonesia) and the1995 NGO Forum on APEC in Kyoto (Chavez-Malaluan and Bello 1996).

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10 IBON is a research-education-information and advocacy organization set up in 1978. For details, see http://www.ibon.org.

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9 Activism and aid

Shaping the peace movement in Timor-Leste

Thushara Dibley

A group of twenty teenagers were sitting on plastic chairs scattered across patches of shade in the front yard of a house in suburban Dili. They were attending a 'peacebuilding training' session run by Friends of Peace (Belun Ba Dame), a youth group that had received a small amount of money to work with young people in five different communities around the city. The trainers, themselves not much older than the trainees, referred to their manuals as they explained the instructions for the next activity – a role play. Participants had to demonstrate their understanding of mediation, arbitration and negotiation by enacting a scene in which a fruit seller with only a small number of oranges has two customers battling over his produce. The task was ambitious, as the trainers had spent less than five minutes explaining the three different concepts, but the performances indicated that most of the young people had some experience dealing with conflict. Raised voices and flying oranges made for entertaining viewing and created an opportunity for the trainers to discuss strategies for dealing with a situation that could feasibly occur in the lives of these young people.

This training session was one of many similar activities being implemented around Dili in the aftermath of the conflict that engulfed the new nation in 2006, four years after it had achieved independence from Indonesia. Over 30 people were killed and close to 150,000 were displaced from their homes in the course of the unexpected violence, which had its roots in a conflict within the Timorese military. For almost two years after this initial outbreak, the people of Timor-Leste experienced sporadic violence, held at bay by international troops. Until that point, Timor-Leste had been hailed as a success story for the international aid community and as one of the most effective nation-building missions of the United Nations (UN). As testament to its achievements, the UN was scheduled to withdraw from the country just prior to the 2006 crisis. Instead, the onset of renewed violence led to the establishment of a new UN mission and the commencement of a range of programmes by international NGOs and donor agencies aimed at addressing the problems that led to and emerged from the conflict.

Within the local activist community, the 2006 crisis inspired a new interest in peacebuilding. The instability in Timor-Leste affected the day-to-day lives of many activists and motivated them to understand why conflict had occurred and how they could address it. Initially, the crisis forced many local NGOs to cease

operating. Individuals from these NGOs who wanted to respond to problems that had emerged from the crisis sought opportunities with international and government agencies and with local NGOs that had been able to stay open, all of which were running programmes in camps for internally displaced people. Once the situation stabilized, these individuals brought ideas, skills and a new commitment to peace back to their organizations, sparking a widespread interest in peacebuilding throughout civil society that was supported by international aid agencies that shared similar goals.

But what effect did the presence of the international aid machine have on these activists? And to what degree did their new interest in peacebuilding constitute the foundation for a movement for peace? This chapter opens with a discussion of how the literature on social movements defines and describes the 'peace movement', before considering how aid agencies may influence the formation of such movements. After providing a brief history of Timor-Leste and describing the events of 2006 in some detail, it goes on to describe the actions of international aid agencies and local NGOs in response to the conflict before assessing whether these activities could constitute a peace movement. The chapter argues that while programmes and funding provided by international NGOs and the international community stimulated a broad enthusiasm about peacebuilding within a younger generation of activists in Timor-Leste, they directed this interest towards individualized activities aimed at containing the conflict and creating stability. In other words, the presence of the international aid industry in Timor-Leste during and after the 2006 political crisis simultaneously fed local activists' interest in peace and dampened their capacity to form a movement for peace.[1]

Peace movements and international aid

There are a number of serious limitations in the literature about peace movements, and particularly about peace movements in Southeast Asia. First, most scholarly accounts are based on research conducted in Northern countries or, alternatively, about issues of concern to Northern activists. Much of this research is about activism that occurred during and up to the end of the Cold War, a period when peace movements in the US were focused on nuclear disarmament and opposing the Vietnam War (Salomon 1986; Marullo 1996; Marullo and Meyer 2004). In Europe, similar movements formed to oppose US foreign policies more broadly and to promote pacifism (Kriesi and van Praag 1987; Mueller and Risse-Kappen 1987; Wittner 1987). More contemporary research focuses heavily on anti-war activism prior to and during the Iraq War in 2003 (Carty and Onyett 2006; Pickerill and Webster 2006). This research, too, concentrates on movements in countries such as the US and the United Kingdom, with very little attention to Southern participants in these movements or to peace movements in the South.

There is also limited theoretical discussion about what a peace movement actually is. Scholars have focused on describing the institutional forms and the frames used by the activists opposing conflicts that are of central importance to Northern countries, such as the Vietnam War and the war in Iraq, rather than determining

what makes a particular movement a movement for peace (Meyer and Whittier 1994; Edwards and Marullo 1995; Marullo 1996).[2] Scholars of more recent movements have argued that the peace movement is in fact a 'movement of movements' because of its use of the frameworks of global justice and anti-globalization to appeal to a wider constituency (Carty and Onyett 2006: 235; Pickerill and Webster 2006: 415). Nonetheless, these analyses maintain their Northern perspective, and the assumption remains that conflicts which are of greatest concern to people in the North are the main targets of the international peace movement. As a result, there is little sense of what such a movement would look like in a Southeast Asian context.

Another explanation for the lack of discussion about Southeast Asia in the literature about peace movements is that much of what could be considered peace activism in this region has been absorbed into democracy movements, separatist movements or the broader movement for human rights. Students participating in protests for a referendum for independence in Aceh in 1998, for example, have typically been understood as part of the separatist movement. They could, however, have been considered part of a peace movement since they were seeking a policy change that they hoped would end the violence in the province (Drexler 2008). In other cases, actions taken by religious leaders are considered to be examples of peace activism, but not necessarily as part of a peace movement. For example, in her discussion of the Buddhist monks who led walks into and around Cambodia to encourage people to return to their homes after they had been forcibly removed in the early 1990s, Poethig (2002) described their actions as a transnational socially engaged act of Buddhism rather than as part of a peace movement. Similarly, the protests in Burma led by monks during the Saffron Revolution in 2007 were seen as part of the broader democratization movement, though they also used non-violent methods (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2008).

A more comprehensive body of literature deals with peacebuilding, an activity that occurs primarily in Southern countries and that involves international aid agencies (Paris 2004; Orjuela 2005; Pearce 2005; Belloni 2008). This literature provides some insight into the challenges that emerge when NGOs work together across scales to address issues of peace and raises multiple questions about how aid agencies might influence the formation of a movement for peace in places that have experienced conflict. Peacebuilding is an activity that may emerge from the efforts of a peace movement, in that it aims to address inequalities that can contribute to violent conflict. However, peacebuilding is seldom a contentious activity. Rather, it involves addressing structural inequality, strengthening institutions and building relationships at a state, community and individual level (Galtung 1969; Lederach 1995; Paris 2004).

In developing countries, peacebuilding programmes have been implemented by international aid organizations and the United Nations. Since the 1990s, these international actors have played a central role in responding to the increased frequency of internal identity-based wars along religious or ethnic lines, particularly in former colonial states (Wallensteen and Sollenberg 2001). Between 1990 and 1992, 11–13 new conflicts emerged each year in regions such as Central America, Southeast Europe, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Wallensteen

and Sollenberg 2001; Paris 2002). In 1992, the concept of 'peacebuilding' was developed as a way of describing the United Nations' role in managing these kinds of conflict and addressing the aftermath of violence (Boutros-Ghali 1992).[3] In places where peace agreements had been signed after a period of conflict, the United Nations and other supporting institutions would oversee elections, help redevelop state institutions and channel resources towards civil society (Bertram 1995). The key reasons practitioners seek to support civil society are to create institutions that counter-balance and challenge the state and as a means of helping people develop the skills needed to engage in a democracy (Paris 2004). In practice, however, this strategy can be undermined by local organizations that alter their agendas so as to attract international funding (Orjuela 2005). By trying to accommodate and appeal to the priorities of international organizations, local organizations marginalize and potentially alienate their local constituencies and in the process become less and less capable of driving the broad structural change required in the aftermath of conflict (Belloni 2008). International organizations can further undermine the process of change by their tendency to fund organizations that echo their values and philosophies, which can lead to the side-lining of institutions with more radical values (Pearce 2005).

Moreover, forming a peace movement and developing civil society are very different endeavours. International aid agencies that want to support the development of civil society can do this by engaging in the very concrete activity of developing and supporting institutions. Stimulating the formation of a movement for peace is a much less tangible endeavour that requires the mobilization of a group of people who share a common identity and ensuring they develop a sustainable strategy to achieve their shared goals. Social movement scholars have observed that belonging to professional or social networks that have links to social movements can make it more likely that an individual will become part of a social movement (Diani 2004). In a location where international aid organizations are operating, the networks from which a social movement draws its constituents might not only include local civil society organizations, their staff, political parties and individual activists, but also staff of the international agencies themselves.

The question then arises as to whether aid agencies are equipped to take on the task of mobilizing such a wide range of individuals and organizations and, if not, whether their presence allows local activists the space and opportunity to engage in contentious action in support of peace.[4] Such questions are particularly relevant for a country such as Timor-Leste, where many very experienced activists have lived through periods of intense conflict followed by high levels of aid intervention. The history of conflict and aid intervention in Timor-Leste therefore provides a useful case study for understanding the role of international aid agencies in determining the extent to which peace activism and peacebuilding coincide.

A history of conflict

Violent conflict had been part of Timorese history from well before it achieved independence. Timor-Leste was a Portuguese colony for over 450 years. During

that time, there were periodic violent altercations between the Timorese and their colonizers as well as between different groups of Timorese. In 1974, internal conflict broke out between Frente Revolusionaria de Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN), the left-leaning group that supported Timorese independence, and União Democratica Timorense (UDT), which supported autonomy within a broader Portuguese community. In the midst of this conflict, in December 1975 Indonesia invaded Timor-Leste on the premise that the bloody civil war that had begun would rage on indefinitely without some kind of intervention (Jolliffe 1995; Dunn 2003). The occupation of Timor-Leste by Indonesia was never formally accepted by the UN, and was contested for the 25 years of its duration by Timorese activists, a Timorese guerrilla army and by supporters of Timorese independence around the world.

In 1999, under pressure from the international community after the resignation of President Suharto, the Indonesian government allowed the people of Timor to vote on whether or not to remain part of Indonesia. When a majority voted for independence, the departing military oversaw wide-scale destruction of infrastructure by armed militia groups and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. International support for the new country, which officially achieved independence in 2002 after two years of UN administration, continued in the form of three more UN missions, a plethora of multilateral donors and hundreds of international NGOs.

Prior to the 1999 referendum, local activists had worked virtually in isolation, with minimal support or intervention by foreign donors. During this period, Timorese activists developed strategies for navigating the oppressive environment in which they operated, but were free to set their own priorities and goals. This situation changed dramatically when the UN and hundreds of international NGOs and aid agencies arrived in Dili (Ife 1999). International agencies initially failed to consult with local activists, which led to the development of aid distribution strategies that undermined the relationships between local NGOs and communities (Hunt 2008).[5] As funding became available, more local NGOs were established; however, their lack of knowledge about development and lack of experience working with donors meant that many of them quickly became dependent on international funding and were forced to engage in 'capacity building' activities which took them away from their core programmes (Patrick 2001). Between 1999 and 2006, local activists provided services in areas like health and education, mostly at the community level.

The outbreak of violence in 2006 directed the attention of the government, international agencies and local activists away from these long-term development issues. In April, a group of 591 soldiers from the 'western' part of Timor organized a four-day demonstration to dispute their sacking from the military. They had been formally dismissed by the head of the armed forces, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak, after they had abandoned their barracks in protest against perceived unfair treatment (Rees 2004). On the final day of the protest, violence in different parts of Dili resulted in the death of five civilians. Over the following month, the National Police Force disintegrated and tensions mounted between President

Gusmão and the governing FRETILIN party (United Nations Commission of Inquiry 2006). On 3 May, the Australian-trained Major Alfredo Reinado and his platoon of armed officers abandoned the Military Police, pledging allegiance to Gusmão (International Crisis Group 2006). Within a month, international troops had arrived, but not before fighting between the military and the police led to the death of nine unarmed police officers.[6] Shortly afterwards, Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri resigned and was replaced by Jose Ramos Horta, the former Foreign Affairs Minister (International Crisis Group 2006; United Nations Commission of Inquiry 2006).

At this point, the political upheaval was overtaken by fights between rival gangs, which became the driving force behind the country's instability. Security groups headed by disaffected veterans of the former guerrilla movement had been peripherally involved early in the crisis. But after the breakdown of the police force, conflict between martial arts groups became more prominent, with some groups siding with people from the 'east' and others with people from the 'west' (Scambary 2009). Martial arts groups had long been present in Timor: many of the 15–20 groups that existed in the country were established during the Indonesian occupation (CAVR 2006). In a country with few employment opportunities, these groups provide a community and sense of purpose for their 20,000 registered members, many of whom are young people (Scambary 2009). The fighting between martial arts groups contributed to 2,000 houses being burnt and 140,000 people fleeing to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps (United Nations Commission of Inquiry 2006; Devant 2008).

The instability in Timor-Leste continued throughout 2007 and until early 2008. In April 2007, Jose Ramos Horta was elected President. Two months later, FRETILIN was narrowly defeated in the parliamentary elections by Gusmão's new party, National Congress for the Reconstruction of East Timor (Congresso Nacional da Reconstrucao de Timor, CNRT). The defeat was contested by FRETILIN, a dispute that caused most of the ensuing unrest. The inability of the international forces to successfully capture and contain Alfreido Reinado and his supporters was another source of tension. After being arrested in July 2006 and then escaping from prison, Reinado based himself in a guest house in a mountain village called Maubisse, refusing to surrender and face the local justice system (Grenfell 2009: 220). The fact that he and his men were armed left the nation anxious that violence could re-emerge. When Reinado came to Dili in February 2008 with a group of his men, allegedly to kill the President, the President's guard shot Reinado dead, but not before one of Reinado's men managed to shoot President Ramos Horta. While this incident sparked fears of further violence, it was, in fact, an event that brought an end to the worst of the instability in Timor-Leste.

Generating interest in peacebuilding

The breakdown of newly formed state institutions, including the military and the police; the doubt cast upon the intentions of politicians; and daily violent altercations between gangs made life, particularly in Dili, unpredictable and unstable. At

the core of this instability was the lack of clarity about who was responsible for the violence and who had the power to bring it to an end. These events were no less distressing for the country's activists, many of whom were directly affected by the security situation. The ability for NGOs and other civil society organizations to conduct their day-to-day activities was significantly impaired by the crisis. In some instances, the personal safety of the activists was at risk. Violence in the streets would frequently prevent staff members from travelling into the office and would make it impossible to undertake visits to projects and communities outside of Dili. On more than one occasion, high profile peace activists were shot at with homemade arrows. Other activists' homes were burnt down, forcing them to seek refuge in spare rooms in their offices or in make-shift camps in the grounds of other NGOs. Training rooms and meeting spaces became homes for whole families, small office kitchens had to service large groups of people and office resources were frequently used to meet the daily needs of the new occupants.

In addition to coping with the unpredictable security situation, activists had to negotiate the frequently changing political environment. The ousting of Prime Minister Alkatiri was strongly criticized by backers of FRETILIN, the party to which he belonged, but supported by those who believed that the former Prime Minister had been behind the violence. These same political antagonisms surfaced again in the lead-up to and after the election in 2007. As discussed, FRETILIN won the majority of the parliamentary seats but did not have an overall majority, leading to a coalition of smaller political parties taking government. These decisions created rifts between and within civil society organizations along political lines, which became obstacles to developing joint strategies on how to respond to the political crisis.

During this period of flux, some experienced activists took the initiative to establish programmes in response to the crisis. The Law, Rights and Justice Association (Perkumpulan HAK, hereafter HAK), an advocacy NGO established prior to independence in 1997, was accustomed to working in difficult situations. In 2006, HAK and some individuals from other organizations attempted to negotiate a peace agreement between rival gangs in an effort to curb the violence in Bairo Pite, a suburb of Dili that became a hot-spot during the crisis. For the most part, however, the more established civil society organizations, many of which were founded during the resistance period, were consumed by the politics of the conflict and were not equipped to deal with challenges that the crisis presented.[7] The violence forced many other local NGOs into a period of dormancy. For example, Watch with Care (Forum Tau Matan, FTM), a human rights NGO based in Dili, ceased operating for three to four months after its office was raided and burnt down and its coordinator had been driven out of his home and to an IDP camp (Interview with Joao Pequinho, FTM, Dili, 28 July 2009). Those organizations that did remain open were only partially operational, as the disruptions to daily life caused by the conflict made it almost impossible to run activities as usual. The office of K'nua Buka Hatene, which regularly ran English language and computer training courses prior to 2006, for example, became a refuge for staff who had lost their homes during the crisis. The training programmes were altered, and

frequently cancelled, to accommodate the fact that the training rooms had become temporary shelters for displaced staff and their families (Butler 2008).

International NGOs were also affected by the events of 2006. However, most were able to continue operating, and as a result played a central role in involving local activists in the response to the crisis. Individual staff members who had been in Timor after 1999 had observed how local NGOs had been side-lined after the arrival of the international community, and took the initiative to establish programmes that provided opportunities to bring local activists into existing programmes. For example, one of the key priorities for the international community in the immediate aftermath of the crisis was to ensure that there were sufficient resources and support being provided to those who had fled to the IDP camps around Dili. In collaboration with Oxfam and an umbrella body for local NGOs, the Irish NGO Concern established a working party that mirrored a similar structure established by international agencies. This working party included groups such as the Food Distribution Monitoring Group, the Child Protection Group and the Community Security Group whose members included staff from temporarily non-functioning NGOs as well as activists or members of the community who wanted to help (Interview with Clare Danby, Concern Former Country Director, Dili, 14 September 2009).

Through these and other initiatives, international organizations played a central role in equipping a new generation of activists with concepts and tools to help them engage with the changes occurring around them. Some of these activists came from established civil society organizations, but most of those attracted to the post-crisis peacebuilding work were younger people who had been deeply affected by the events of 2006. Some individuals with an existing interest in peacebuilding began working for international organizations; others initially became involved in mediation activities in their local neighbourhoods, many of whom subsequently also became involved in internationally-funded peacebuilding projects. For example a group of students from the National University of Timor-Leste organized meetings between the international security forces and youth which clarified the role of the forces in the community in violent suburbs around Dili in 2006. Some of these students went on to establish youth groups, which attracted funding from international donors, or became volunteers at the Peace Centre, a research NGO established at UNTL, where they ran training and research programmes funded by the Irish Catholic aid organization, Trócaire (Interview with Elsa Pinto, The Peace Center, Dili, 15 September 2009).

During the most volatile period of the conflict in 2006 and 2007, some organizations arranged training programmes that offered activists a practical way to engage with the rapidly changing political situation. In early 2007, Concern invited a transnational peace organization based in Cambodia called Action Asia to work closely with the Community Security Group, which by that stage had been renamed Peacebuilding Working Group (Equipa Hari'i Dame).[8] Initially Action Asia provided peacebuilding training to members of Equipa Hari'i Dame, who later travelled with Action Asia staff around Timor-Leste to provide the same training to community leaders and village based community organizations. The

training manuals used during this project became the basis of knowledge about peacebuilding for many activists, some of whom went on to apply these ideas in their own organizations.[9] Another international organization, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), funded the group of students who had been active in the early days of the crisis to host a peace camp on Atauro, an island opposite Dili in 2006–07 (Interviews with Elsa Pinto and Antero Bendito, The Peace Center, Dili, 27 September 2008). AFSC funded Action Asia to facilitate the training, and as a result this camp became another place through which ideas of peacebuilding became embedded within the community of activists who had an interest in issues of peace.

More and more Timorese activists became exposed to ideas about peacebuilding as international organizations established additional programmes that addressed the conflict and its causes. Some of these training opportunities targeted Timorese staff working for international NGOs, many of whom had come from the activist community. For example, all local staff at Care International were trained by external trainers. Those working on the peacebuilding project were later informally trained by their programme manager to use their peacebuilding manual. In another example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided comprehensive support to the Ministry of Social Solidarity's Dialogue Teams, which conducted mediation in conflict-affected communities around the country. In addition to initially funding all staff costs, as well as the costs associated with community meetings and a range of events intended to bring communities together, the UNDP paid a staff member to provide regular training and support to those responsible for the mediation. The mediators attended regular training sessions from the time they commenced their roles (Interview with Ben Larke, UNDP, Dili, 24 August 2009).

Staff and activists in local NGOs also had access to peacebuilding training. For example, in 2006 the Australian organization, Union Aid Abroad APHEDA, ran a one-week course for representatives from all their local partner organizations.[10] This course provided activists with tools for analysing the conflict and understanding the role of NGOs within communities experiencing violence. It also included a component in which the local partners had to design a programme for their organization that was sensitive to the dynamics of the conflict. In 2009, the Japanese government funded a two-week training programme in Japan for Timorese peace activists, many of whom had been involved in peacebuilding training during and after the 2006 crisis. Other more informal opportunities to share information about peacebuilding also occurred. For example, Trócaire's peacebuilding officer from Ireland ran an information session about peacebuilding for staff and their local partners when she visited Timor in November 2008. The rationale for this training session was to ensure that the ideas underpinning the work of the local NGOs were consistent with Trócaire's ideas about peacebuilding (Interview with Trócaire Country Representative, Dili, 15 September 2009).

The knowledge that local activists developed through these multiple training opportunities was put to use in a range of international agency- and government-funded peacebuilding programmes, most of which included a conflict resolution

training component for community and youth leaders. For example, Care International worked in partnership with a NGO founded by an American aid worker called For the Future (Ba Futuru) to provide training to community leaders within Bairo Pite, an area that had experienced acute violence during 2006–07.[11] A small local NGO called Espada received funding from the Timorese government to run a similar programme in five districts around Timor-Leste. Other programmes specifically targeted youth, for example, the development of sports fields and the hosting of sporting events, vocational training and the provision of small grants to youth groups that wished to run projects in their communities. Programmes targeting gangs and gang leaders were also funded. For example, the Catholic Relief Service supported a church based organization called the Justice and Peace Commission to seek funding for training programmes for gang members which occurred in 2007–08 and again in 2010, while HAK received funding from Oxfam and Concern to establish a programme with Action Asia that took gang members overseas for training with other young people and developed agreements between different gangs (Interview with Juliao da Costa C. Caetano, Concern, Dili, 29 September 2008; see also Muggah and LeBrun 2010).

This wide range of peacebuilding activities resulted in the formation of a sense of community around issues of peace in the capital, as local activists, local NGOs and international agencies developed an awareness of which individuals were actively involved in peacebuilding through their participation in working groups and training sessions. In the process, local activists and trainers developed profiles as peace activists which helped them – as individuals – move through the community in different roles. For example, a staff member working for Oxfam in 2006 became well known for his central role in Equipa Hari'i Dame before going on to work at a peacebuilding organization called Belun, where he was able to apply much of his knowledge. The former coordinator of Equipa Hari'i Dame went on to attract funding for her NGO, Espada, from the Prime Minister's Office. Her reputation as an effective peacebuilding trainer contributed significantly to this success. In both cases, it was the activists' engagement with internationally funded peacebuilding activities that raised their profile locally.[12]

The opportunities, access to new ideas and local community that developed in Timor-Leste as a result of international NGO and donor interest in peacebuilding had some features of a social movement, but could not be said to be the start of a movement for peace. The international intervention targeted a younger generation of Timorese activists, helping them become a technically-savvy community of mediators, negotiators and trainers focused on changing the behaviour of individuals as a means of containing any future conflict. But it did not help these activists to find ways of working across the political divides in their own community in order to lobby government to address structural issues contributing to the conflict such as unemployment, corruption, weaknesses in the judicial system or problems with the security forces.[13] In addition, the involvement of international agencies in the peacebuilding process meant that the community of activists working on peace in the aftermath of the 2006 crisis were forced into a project-driven mode. That is, those local organizations that took on peacebuilding

assignments tended to handle issues of peace and conflict in ways that reflected the interests and priorities of their donors, who tended to fund short term projects that aligned with the key concerns of the Timor-Leste government and their own funding agencies, namely the achievement of stability and security and the well-being of IDPs.

One of the government's key priorities in the aftermath of the crisis was ensuring that the many thousands of people displaced by the conflict returned home (Devant 2008). Within months of the crisis breaking out, in August 2006 the Ministry of Labour and Social Reinsertion developed the Accept One Another (Simu Malu) programme. The key goals of this programme were to facilitate dialogue between IDPs and the communities to which they were returning in order to bring an end to the violence and provide protection to the population (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2006). In December 2007, after the elections, the new government redesigned the approach to IDP return, introducing a National Recovery Strategy (Hamutuk Hari'i Futuru). This strategy addressed five key issues: housing, protection, stability, economy and trust-building (International Crisis Group 2008). The UN, bilateral donors and international NGOs supported both programmes. The majority of the peacebuilding programmes initially implemented by local NGOs were designed to ensure that IDP camps were safe and secure. For example, part of the child protection strategy within the IDP camps, Ba Futuru worked with UNICEF to run programmes to enhance the conflict resolution skills of the children, provide psycho-social activities to help the children cope with their experiences of violent conflict and expose them to the 'language of human rights and self-worth' (Ba Futuru 2007: 10). The focus of the peacebuilding programmes later changed to support the process of closing down the IDP camps. For example, both the Catholic Relief Service and Care International had programmes focused on particular suburbs of Dili, to which IDPs were returning, which involved training NGO staff to mediate between the returning IDPs and their home communities (Interview with Dan Hardy, Care International, Dili, 16 September 2008). The effect of these programmes on the meaning of peacebuilding in a Timorese context was significant: peacebuilding became synonymous with developing individuals' conflict resolution skills and changing individuals' behaviour. It was not an activity that involved contentious action and protest.

Similarly, the involvement of youth in the violence in 2006 prompted many international and local organizations to devise peacebuilding programmes that targeted young people. While some of these programmes addressed the underlying unemployment problem, which had fuelled the crisis, the majority focused on creating stability in communities that had experienced violence. Forum Tau Matan received funding from Care International to provide young people with the resources to build a basketball court as a way of contributing something to their neighbourhood and improving their standing in the community. Care International and Forum Tau Matan hoped that the youth would then be less inclined to engage in destructive activities (Interviews with Dan Hardy, Care International and Joao Peqhuino, FTM, Dili, 22 September 2008). Plan International also set up

a peacebuilding project for youth that involved a sports programme and screening films (Interview with Janio Aldorado and Felipe Hendriquez, Plan, Dili, 6 August 2009). These programmes targeted the problems faced by the community during the crisis, but they could not be considered part of a social movement. Rather, they were community development programmes that aimed to stabilize communities, provide skills to young people and involve them in activities which would stop them from engaging in violence.

The funding structures and timeframes established by the international aid community also shaped the ways in which local organizations and individuals with an interest in peace worked together. This was particularly apparent in the operation of the Peacebuilding Working Group, a network established in 2007 by international NGOs involved in implementing peacebuilding projects. Local NGOs, many of which had previously been part of Equipa Hari'i Dame, were also invited to participate. The purpose behind establishing the network was to avoid duplication of projects, to ensure that peacebuilding training modules presented a consistent message to communities and to be strategic about how funding for peacebuilding was used (Peacebuilding Working Group meeting, Dili, 18 August 2009). One of the key obstacles the working group faced in achieving this aim was that each member organization received funding from a different source, and the timing of the programmes did not align. As a result it was very difficult to develop joint strategies. The group itself experienced considerable difficulty building up momentum, in part because organizations' other commitments meant that they met so infrequently. Moreover, as different individuals represented each organization at different meetings, considerable time was spent going over basic information. As a consequence, the group was able to achieve very few concrete results.[14] The difficulties faced by this working group are indicative of how the structures encouraged by the international aid system created obstacles for the many activists with an interest in peace to establish a movement.

A blessing and a curse

International funding played a central role in disseminating ideas about peacebuilding and generating opportunities for local activists to become engaged in peace-related activities in Timor-Leste after the 2006 crisis. The interest in peacebuilding that developed should not, however, be mistaken for a social movement for peace. While some key elements of a social movement were generated – the formation of a shared identity around an interest in peace and a commitment to change (in the sense of ending violence) – the peacebuilding activities that occurred in Timor-Leste during this time were not contentious and were not driven by any kind of unified strategy for change. Questions also remain as to how effectively they can be sustained once funding from the international community for these types of activities ends.

International aid agencies channelled the energy of a new generation of activists, unencumbered by the political webs in which their more established counterparts were entangled, towards activities that would help 'contain' the

conflict. This younger generation of Timorese activists was engaged in peacebuilding either through local (or semi-local) institutions or through their work for international NGOs or the UN. The way that issues of peace were presented to this newer cohort of activists was far removed from the political meanings of peacebuilding, emphasizing instead ways of changing the behaviour of individuals and establishing activities that would distract youth from participating in violence. This focus reflected the unwillingness of international organizations to become politically involved in the context in which they worked (Interview with Trócaire Country Representative, Dili, 15 September 2009 and Care International Country Director, Dili, 11 September 2009).

This approach may indeed have been the most practical for international organizations concerned with stemming the humanitarian crisis in Timor-Leste and for creating opportunities for communication between groups that had previously been in conflict. But it also suggests that international aid is not always the most effective way of creating a social movement for peace. The international aid presence gave local activists with an interest in peacebuilding access to new ideas, frameworks and projects – and, in some cases, funding for activities focused on building peace. But international agencies in no way sought to tackle the deeply embedded political fissures that prevented activists from collaborating with one another and discouraged political mobilization. Their decision to avoid such activities exposes the chasm that exists between peacebuilding as an aid-funded activity and peace activism, which requires a commitment to political and contentious action that the international aid industry is simply not equipped to provide.

Notes

1 This chapter is based primarily on fieldwork undertaken in Dili in 2008 and 2009 as part of my PhD candidature in the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney.
2 But see Salomon (1986: 117), who argues that using the term ‘peace movement’ to describe the anti-nuclear campaigns in the USA in the 1980s is a ‘misnomer’ because the movement was not focused on addressing the ‘conditions of peace’.
3 The term peacebuilding was coined in the 1960s by Johan Galtung, though did not become widely used until it was redefined in the UN document *Agenda for Peace* (Galtung 1969; Boutros-Ghali 1992).
4 There is little research available that speaks directly to the question of how an increased international presence affects the development of local peace movements – in fact, research about the impact of aid on any social movements is scarce (Ford and Dibley 2011).
5 For instance, immediately after the violence in 1999, Caritas Australia began distributing food for the World Food Programme (WFP) using WFP procedures. Caritas Dili, a local organization which had been actively distributing food prior to the emergency, found that the procedures contradicted their approach and potentially did not ensure food reached those who most needed it, but was unable to reclaim the process (Hunt 2008).
6 The police officers who were killed had been involved in a gun battle that day with members of the military. This battle resulted in the death of one member of the military. The UN negotiated a ceasefire in which the police officers surrendered their arms, and were accompanied by the UN officers to the UN compound. As they walked past the

members of the military whom they had just been fighting, the military opened fire killing the nine police officers (United Nations Commission of Inquiry 2006).

7 For example, another long standing organization, the Institute for Popular Education (Institute Edukasaun Popular, IEP, formerly Sahe), ceased operations due to political divisions between its key members, some of whom openly supported FRETILIN and some of whom did not (Anonymous interview, Dili, 9 September 2009).

8 Another working group established in 2007 was given the English name of the Peacebuilding Working Group, so for the purposes of clarity I will refer to this organization by its Tetum name. Other working groups established between 2006 and 2009 that addressed peacebuilding issues included the Hamutuk Hari'i Konfiansa working group.

9 Interviews with Leonie Venrojie, Oxfam (SEPP Programme Manager), Dili, 22 September 2008; Juliao da Costa C. Caetano, Concern (Peacebuilding Officer), Dili, 29 September 2008; Lourenco Tito X. Lopes, NGO Forum (Capacity Building Coordinator), Dili, 24 September 2008; Claire Danby, Concern (Former Country Director), Dili 14 September 2009.

10 I was in Timor-Leste at the time and provided this training in my capacity as a volunteer for Union Aid Abroad APHEDA.

11 The status of Ba Futuru as a 'local' NGO is controversial because it was established and effectively run by an American. However, its employees and trainers were all Timorese and it warrants a mention because it was contracted by a number of international NGOs, in addition to Care International, to conduct peacebuilding training.

12 Frequently, activists' movement between organizations was motivated by offers of higher salaries but, even so, the effect was the same: local activists developed a public profile and were called upon because of their expertise and experience with peacebuilding.

13 Different agencies within the international community and within local civil society engaged in projects targeting these factors, but a peace movement led by local activists would have been well placed to lead the call for change on these issues.

14 Another group, called the Peace Education Working Group was formed at a similar time in 2007. In order to consolidate their activities the two groups tried to merge; but two years after merging the infrequent meetings were still based around determining the terms of reference for the new group.

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10 International agendas and sex worker rights in Cambodia

Larissa Sandy

It is the second anniversary celebrations for the local sex worker collective, the Women's Network for Unity (WNU). The celebrations commence with a song performed by members of the collective about HIV prevention, followed by the elegantly dressed and beautifully made-up *srei sroh* (transgender women). Dressed in a traditional *sampot* with frangipani flowers in their hair and silver cups in their hands full of flower petals, the *srei sroh* perform a Khmer dance as they scatter petals over the audience. The venue is packed as Princess Rattana Devi mingles with 300+ sex workers and their supporters, all wearing yellow t-shirts emblazoned with the WNU logo picturing sexy, assertive Khmer women with their arms linked around each other supporting a banner, under which is the slogan: Women United to Help Each Other. Other dignitaries are in the crowd, including Mu Sochua, the Minister for Women's and Veterans Affairs, Men Sam An, a legislator for the ruling Cambodian People's Party, and Dr Tia Phalla, General Secretary of the National Aids Authority (NAA). Crews from local TV stations jostle with reporters and photographers for pole position as sex workers chant 'power to the Women's Network for Unity'. The ubiquitous banner hangs behind the stage with hardly any space left as the WNU thanks the myriad local (USG, CWPD, PSAD, KWCD, KHEMARA, CFDS, RADE) and international NGOs (Oxfam, PSF, FHI) for their support. Thanks are made to USAID for its generous funding and to the additional support provided by two key government organizations responsible for HIV care, prevention and treatment, the NAA and National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD [*sic*] (NCHADS).

Srey Mao comes on stage and shares her life story with the audience, telling of her daily struggles to make a living. The tears flow as she speaks about her hardship and difficult working conditions and discrimination, including mistreatment by the authorities and brutal rapes. Visibly touched by the event, Mu Sochua proclaims her pride in the network and its achievements: 'I feel courage, togetherness and wholeness . . . The light in this very dark tunnel for our sisters and nieces is already here. It is in their commitment to make the changes for themselves'. Similarly moved, Men Sam An exclaims: 'After listening to the stories and struggle of our sisters and nieces to live and

> be recognized as human beings with rights and value, I feel excited and full of praise. You should enjoy the same rights as everyone else and no one should violate your rights. As a Member of Parliament I fully support the Women's Network for Unity'.[1]
>
> (Fieldnotes, 28 June 2002)

This vignette, drawn from my fieldwork and volunteer work with an NGO, illustrates the long history of sex worker activism and organizing in Cambodia. This key event played out against a background of shifts in international policy that featured a renewed concern for human trafficking, in particular the trafficking of women and girls for prostitution, which had particular consequences for sex workers and sex worker activism in the country. These shifts led to the introduction of draconian legislation that criminalized sex work and equated it with human trafficking, which severely undermined the key claims of the local movement. It also saw the support for this local sex worker organization demonstrated in the vignette withdrawn as the government flicked the switch to 'off', thus further darkening their already 'very dark tunnel'.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the global sex workers' rights movement and examine the manifestation of this particular movement in Cambodia.[2] I consider some of the key claims of the local movement, outline what it sought to achieve and discuss its dynamics in relation to the dramatic shifts that occurred in international approaches toward sex work and human trafficking in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In describing local and international responses to these shifts, I aim to show how changes in international policy transformed the landscape of sex work in the country and reflect on the ramifications this had for the local sex worker rights movement. I argue that while emerging international agendas strengthened the trafficking approach and thus further compounded the stigmatization, oppression and marginalization of sex workers, it has also spurred local activists to develop international and regional alliances to promote change and advance sex workers' rights.

The whores are on strike

The now global sex worker rights movement emerged in the 1970s out of the American civil rights movement (Alexander 1998; Kempadoo 1998; Leigh 1997).[3] Observers date the beginning of this social movement to 1973 and the founding of Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE), a San Francisco-based sex worker collective, the first of several sex worker organizations to blossom across the United States around this time. In Europe, the emergence of the modern-day sex worker rights movement is dated to a strike by French sex workers in 1975, which led to the occupation of churches in Lyon, Marseilles, Grenoble and Montpellier and the subsequent establishment of the French Collective of Prostitutes (Corbin 1990; Delacoste 1998). Collective action by sex workers received significant media attention and provided momentum for the formation of the English Collective of Prostitutes (1975), New York Prostitutes Collective (1979),

Australian Prostitutes Collective (1981) and the Italian Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes (1982). Founded by Margo St James, Gail Pheterson and Priscilla Alexander after the first World Whores Congress (1985), the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR) aimed to connect these sex worker collectives at the international level. After the Second World Whores Congress in 1986, the ICPR developed the World Charter of Prostitutes' Rights, which set out the movement's demands for the decriminalization of sex work, recognition of sex work as a form of labour, the right to self-representation and self-determination, the end to stigma and abuse, self-determination of working conditions and safer working environments, and a guarantee of human and workers rights for all sex workers (ICPR 1998).[4]

The emergence of the sex worker rights movement was accompanied by the development of a reactive – but self-identified and heavily politicized – discourse in which it was argued that sex work was a legitimate occupation for consenting adults. This fledgling discourse gained traction internationally, as sex workers around the world started arguing for the legitimacy of their work and inclusion in society. Through this activity, they began to challenge what they argued were one-dimensional views on sex work expressed by radical feminists, public health officials and governments (Pheterson 1989). Speaking for themselves, without mediation by anti-prostitution feminists or public health officials, many sex workers criticized the hegemonic logic that excluded them from discussions and theorizations about sex work. They argued against the notion that those who sold sex were deviants or enslaved and for the establishment of human rights- and labour rights-based approaches to sex work that were reflective of and attentive to their own lived realities and experiences.

Through the neologism 'sex work', and the discourse that developed around this term, activists were able to form alliances with groups of similarly oppressed workers, as well as with other feminists, scholars, activists and NGO staff sympathetic to their cause. In some industrialized countries like Australia, this discourse became instrumental in shaping government responses to the sex industry as public health officials began to take some of its key messages on board (Saunders 1999). However, the movement was criticized for failing to truly internationalize. While sex workers developed the 'World Charter' in 1986, and trumpeted their 'worldwide' movement, Northern sex workers failed to recognize and deal fully with the dynamics of power and inequality and to treat seriously the issues of sex workers in the South. Consequently, discussions held at World Congresses and platforms for organizing were dominated by sex workers and their advocates from the industrialized North – the same group that had defined the content of the World Charter (Kempadoo 1998).[5]

In actual fact, however, by the late 1980s the movement was no longer exclusive to the United States or Western Europe. Throughout the developing world, sex workers had begun 'fighting to keep brothels open, challenging the various stigmas about prostitution, and exposing corruption within sex industries' (Kempadoo 1998: 1). Yet, as Kempadoo (1998: 2) goes on to note, few people were aware of these developments, as the 'voices and activities of sex workers outside the

industrialized North went unheard, nearly invisible to all but those in the immediate surroundings'. In writing about the history of the sex worker rights movement in the South, Kempadoo charts the establishment of an Ecuadorian association in 1982, which coordinated a strike by sex workers' in 1988 and held two National Congresses in 1993 and 1994. Elsewhere, a 1987 National Prostitutes Conference led to the founding of Da Vida, Brazil's National Network of Prostitutes. These developments were followed by the establishment of AMBAR, the Venezuelan Association of Women for Welfare and Mutual Support (1992), and Chile's Angela Lina and Mexico's Unión Única, both founded in 1993. The following year saw establishment of the Maxi Linder Association in Suriname, the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) in India, the Columbian Association of Women (Cormujer) and the South African organization, SWEAT (Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce). In East Asia, Japan led the way, followed by Hong Kong, where Zi Teng was formed in 1996. Democratic Sex Workers' Solidarity (Minseongnoryeon) has represented sex workers in South Korea for many years now, as has the Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters (COSWAS) in Taiwan. China also has a national sex worker organization (China Sex Worker Organization Network Forum). In Southeast Asia, the first sex worker organization to emerge was Empower, which was founded in 1985 in Thailand. Burma and Cambodia have sex worker groups, and a national sex worker organization is taking shape in Indonesia. While not exhaustive, this list clearly demonstrates that sex worker organizing is not a singular incident triggered by outsiders and that sex worker unions are not simply a 'leftist fantasy' (see Hughes 2004). What is more, as Kempadoo (1998) suggests, each of these groups has a long history pre-dating its formal establishment, with years of collective action having taken place prior to formalization of particular organizations.

The increased participation of sex workers from these developing countries at major international HIV conferences and events – and the concomitant reduction in 'advocates' speaking on their behalf – has seen a gradual redress in this imbalance, especially as the issues these sex workers raised and campaigned about began to be framed as 'global problems'. The character and dynamics of this global social movement reflect the growth of local movements that share an interest in a common set of issues, as well as transnational links and connections. Globally, women and men continue to resolutely fight for their right to find employment in the sex industry and to struggle for just and fair working conditions and the end to stigma and abuse. Importantly, this struggle has played out in concert with and reaction to global campaigns on HIV and human trafficking. As a result, major shifts in international policy and funding on these issues have been a key factor shaping activism and collective action in Cambodia and elsewhere in the region.

International contestation around 'sex as work'

The recognition of sex work as a legitimate occupation is a key platform for the sex worker rights movement. This demand brings to the fore the notion that

women and men may actually choose to work in the industry, thereby forcing many to grapple with the conceptualization of free will and choice (Doezema 1998). Underpinning the 'sex as work' paradigm is the dichotomy of free and forced sexual labour developed by activists in the 1980s, which quickly became one of the dominant models for understanding sex work. This framework was proposed in response to anti-prostitution feminists and others who asserted that all sex work is forced. The sex worker rights movement emerged not only in the context of the broader civil rights movement, but also of second-wave feminism, and within this the rise of sex-positive feminism and an attempt by members of the movement to form an alliance with pro-sex feminists in order to promote social change. The conceptual dichotomy between free and forced sexual labour was developed by Northern sex workers at a time when the international feminist movement was grappling with the issue of sex work. As Delacoste (1998: 11) notes, at this time the feminist movement became 'embroiled in a profound split, dividing those women who wanted to explore the complexities of sexual desire and those who condemned such exploration as a treasonous and antifeminist assimilation of men's objectification of women'. In Cambodia and globally, these incompatible understandings of sex work have struggled for dominance, and a key factor shaping this dominance has been shifts in international policy and funding.

Key texts in the sex worker rights movement, including a collection of writings by sex workers edited by Delacoste and Alexander (1998) and a volume featuring papers by sex workers and feminists sympathetic to their cause edited by Nagel (1997), can be read as being part of a broader effort to 'create a space where "prostitution" was not automatically understood as a metaphor for self-exploitation' (Delacoste 1998: 11). Prior to this, the abolitionist perspective expressed by anti-prostitution feminists had dominated the debate. But through the efforts of sex worker organizations and their allies, the dominance of the anti-prostitution feminists was successfully challenged by those who had come to view sex work as a legitimate occupation. Sex worker activists also found allies in local and global HIV campaigns, and in countries like Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands, where the 'sex as work' paradigm was a crucial factor that facilitated shifts in government policy and funding allocation. For example, in Australia, the national sex worker organization, Scarlet Alliance, is affiliated with the Australian Federation of AIDS Organizations (a powerful lobby group) and successfully promoted the argument that HIV prevention and education programmes were most effectively designed and delivered by members of the groups most affected (Saunders 1999). Within these approaches to HIV, sex worker activists campaigned for the protection of their occupational and human rights as crucial steps in prevention.

Debates around the 'sex as work' paradigm and free/forced dichotomy also shaped various international instruments concerned with human trafficking.[6] Despite the differences between HIV and trafficking, it is not unsurprising that the two issues intersect because the female sex worker is a critical site of intervention in both trafficking and HIV programmes. (Lindquist and Piper 2007: 138). However, the response of anti-trafficking campaigners has been remarkably

different from that of HIV campaigners, with the idea of 'sex as work' facing a significant challenge from proponents of the anti-trafficking framework. Although it is increasingly recognized that trafficking can occur in various migration processes and sites, the anti-trafficking framework is almost exclusively focused on sexual exploitation, and in particular the trafficking of women and children into sex work. Within this 'sexual exploitation' approach, women's participation in sex work is seen as being by nature forced and thus necessarily a form of violence against women. Consequently, sex workers are not considered as women with agency – a key claim of the rights movement – but rather as victims to be saved.

The increasing dominance of the anti-trafficking framework from the early 2000s has resulted in substantive policy changes. As Saunders (2004) and Weitzer (2007) have shown, there has been an almost complete institutionalization of anti-sex work approaches in official discourse, legislation and enforcement practices, as the agenda has moved away from a rights-based approach to one focused on the abolition of the industry in response to the work of powerful lobby groups, including groups from the religious right and abolitionist feminists, that have promoted an understanding of sex work as a modern-day form of slavery.[7] This conflation of sex work and human trafficking and criminalization of sex work has serious consequences for sex workers, leaving them vulnerable and stigmatized (Kapur 2005).

Two key drivers of policy change have been the US government's 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and 2003 United States Leadership against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Act (Global AIDS Act). The TVPA, which was developed and enacted in the final years of the Clinton Administration, initially distinguished between voluntary and forced sex work, defining the former as 'sex trafficking' and the latter as 'severe trafficking'. However, under the Bush administration, this framework was replaced by a model that did not distinguish between the two but rather asserted that all sex work was forced (Bush 2002). As Chapkis (2005: 52) argues, the TVPA 'mobilized anxieties surrounding sexuality and gender in the service of immigration control' through its emphasis on female powerlessness and childlike sexual vulnerability and its deep hostility to poor women and undocumented sex workers. In addition, the division of nations into 'tiers' according to the extent of government action taken to combat trafficking under the TVPA has been enormously influential because it results in the restriction of bilateral aid to Tier Three countries.[8] Meanwhile, the 2003 Global AIDS Act came with a commitment of US$15 billion in additional funding for HIV prevention, care and treatment but withdrew support to sex work projects as the legislation created a series of conditions for the receipt of USAID funding – among them the 'anti-prostitution pledge', which stipulated that, in order to receive USAID funding, groups and organizations must have an explicit policy opposing sex work and sex trafficking (USAID 2005).[9] Along with other developments internationally, these shifts in US policy severely restricted the level of funding available to sex worker organizations, their alliances and partnerships in developing countries like Cambodia, where they became a focus of campaigns by local sex workers.

Cambodian campaigns

The Cambodian sex worker rights movement emerged out of the local women's movement, which flourished as the country made the transition to a market economy during and after the United Nations Transitional Authority period (1991–93) (Hughes 2009). The impetus for the movement came from local and expatriate women activists who campaigned with sex workers for greater rights, recognition and respect. The first sex worker organization, the Cambodian Prostitutes Union (CPU), was established in 1998 as part of these efforts with funding and support from the Cambodian Women's Development Agency, a key women's organization involved in project work and research on trafficking and sex work in Cambodia.

The trafficking of women and children for sex work was an important issue in these early years, with sex workers highlighting the need to distinguish between voluntary and forced sex work and advocating the legalization of sex work and for their occupational and human rights. In June 2000 the Women's Network for Unity (WNU) was established as an independent network run for and by sex workers, rather than by NGO activists.[10] In the early years of organizing, the WNU received strong local and international support and, boasting a membership base of more than 5,000 sex workers nationwide, it quickly became the leading sex worker organization in the country.

A key claim of sex workers' rights organizations in Cambodia is that sex workers choose to do sex work. Chan Dina, a founding member of the CPU, explains:

> I'm considered as a bad person because I choose to remain a sex worker. But I think that it is our Cambodian society that is bad. It doesn't give women like me choices; choices that I see are better for me.
>
> (Rahm 2000: 1)

This view is shared by Prom Hen from the WNU:

> My parents died in the Khmer Rouge so I was an orphan and had to support my four siblings. When I came from my hometown I lived under someone's house, but they poured dirty water on us so I decided to become a sex worker to buy food for my siblings.
>
> (*Phnom Penh Post* 2002b: 14)

Manh Chhreup, also of the WNU, was sold by her neighbour to a brothel when she was 13. She eventually fled, but on returning to Phnom Penh and discovering that her mother was sick, she decided to re-enter the sex industry (*Phnom Penh Post* 2002b: 14).

As these narratives suggest, the local movement has sought recognition of the fact that sex workers consciously engage in sex work primarily for reasons linked to strong family values of survival and support. Explicit in these women's claims

is a very clear articulation of how their choices were constrained.[11] Ultimately, however, these sex worker activists are keen to assert their self-determination and conscious decision-making. The recounting of their life stories is thus a political act through which local sex workers attempt to challenge dominant representations which dispossesses them of their self-determination and positions them as victims to be saved. By expressing the view that sex work is a job and the performance of sexual labour is a means through which they can earn a living, local activists have attempted to define the provision of sexual services as a trade or profession. They claim the right to practice that profession and to access the legal and other protections provided to workers in other industries.

It is clear from the vignette that opens this chapter that in 2002 the WNU was not only in receipt of USAID funding but enjoyed access to state dignitaries, including the Governor of Phnom Penh and Prime Minister of Cambodia. However, after the US government introduced its requirement that recipients of US development aid sign the anti-prostitution pledge, six of the seven local and international NGOs that had been collaborating with the WNU re-worked or dropped their programmes on sex worker empowerment and stopped supporting the WNU for fear that continued collaboration would jeopardize their funding (Sandy 2012). The WNU received another blow to its local power base when the Cambodian government promulgated its Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in February 2008. In August 2002 the Cambodian government had attempted to pass legislation drafted by the Ministry of the Interior, with technical assistance provided by Japan, which aimed to criminalize sex work in the Kingdom (RGC 2002). Introduced at a time when the WNU and CPU had significant local support, the Cambodian government was forced to shelve the draft legislation in the face of the fierce opposition and protest they encountered from sex workers, their supporters and NGOs. However, this was before the TVPA and US funding restrictions on sex work-related projects materialized. In early 2008 the Cambodian government passed an anti-trafficking law that was almost a carbon copy of the 2002 bill (RGC 2008). The 2008 law expressly adopted the US government's policy of eradication by criminalizing sex work and equating it with human trafficking, and was passed by legislators after serious and sustained pressure from the US (Sandy 2012).

In the following sections I describe two major WNU campaigns that compelled local activists to become involved in transnational networks and the global movement. These two campaigns demonstrate how cross-border networks and transnational forms of activism open up new spaces for collective action and articulation of local and global issues in the movement, as global understandings become incorporated into local practices.

The trials of Tenofovir

In January 2003 research work commenced on a clinical trial to test once-daily use of Tenofovir to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV.[12] Tenofovir was widely used in anti-retroviral treatment, and the clinical trial was to test whether

the drug could also prevent infection (James 2004: 4). As Loff et al. (2005: 1619) highlight, Cambodian sex workers 'very vulnerability ma[d]e them "ideal" participants' as they have very little control over their work environments, are routinely raped by clients and the police, and live and work in a political and social environment that undermines and violates their human rights.

The year-long clinical trial aimed to recruit 960 female sex workers in Phnom Penh and offered three US dollars a month as compensation for participation. Community meetings were held between researchers, the WNU and other sex worker representatives, and local and international NGOs in July 2003. Concerns with the study began to surface after those meetings. Key issues for the WNU were the lack of information provided about the drug; issues with the informed consent process and negotiation tools; the lack of long-term medical care in the case of Tenofovir-related side-effects; inadequate care for participants who acquire HIV during the trial; and the lack of sex worker involvement in study design. Clearly, these were serious and legitimate concerns. Activists and advocacy groups also criticized the lack of safety data supporting the long term use of Tenofovir in healthy participants and the planned commencement of phase II trials when phase I trials had not been conducted in HIV-negative participants (Mills et al. 2005a: 1403).

In light of these concerns, the WNU demanded greater involvement in study design and up to 30 years health cover for HIV-negative participants who acquire HIV during the trial and/or suffer long-term health issues as a result of their participation. On 29 March 2004 the WNU held its first press conference, attended by the local and international media, where they raised their objection to the trial and outlined their demands. The trial became an issue of international concern and saw the WNU join forces with the Asia-Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) and the international HIV activist organization, ACT UP (Paris), which were involved in protests against the trials in Cameroon as part of protest action taken at the 2004 International AIDS Society Conference held in Bangkok in the July of that year. The protest thrust the issue and the WNU into the international spotlight, and less than a month later, Prime Minister Hun Sen closed down the clinical trial and ordered the researchers to leave the country (Mills et al. 2005b).

The WNU's protest against placebo-controlled trials among vulnerable populations in the developing world sponsored by multinational pharmaceutical corporations focused attention on the complex ethical and political issues that surround HIV prevention research in resource-limited settings like Cambodia. Small-scale research had been carried out in the US; however, as highlighted by the WNU, study participants in the US had better access to medical care. Their protest sought to not only achieve better outcomes for, and the greater involvement of, sex workers in the research process, but also emphasized their place in the global economic order: in 2003–04 when the trial was to take place, over 36 per cent of the Cambodian population survived on less than US$0.60 a day (UNDP 2003). The protest also called attention to the macro and micro politics of power in post-authoritarian and hierarchically structured societies in which being listened to and having their views taken into consideration was a habit rarely cultivated. As Chan

(1999: 179) from the CPU makes clear, 'you have easy solutions to difficult problems you do not understand, and you do not understand because you do not listen'. A similar view was expressed in a letter from WNU to Prime Minister Hun Sen, written several months after he ordered the foreign researchers involved in the trial to leave the country (Loff et al. 2005: 1618).

The Tenofovir campaign provided a point of articulation between national and transnational issues in the sex workers' rights movement as well as with the concerns of anti-globalization activists, allowing local sex worker organizations to establish an alliance with this social movement in order to promote change. The campaign saw the WNU successfully engage with their international allies, an alliance that the WNU continued to build upon and which played a significant role in subsequent campaigns.

'No Exit'

Under sustained pressure from the US and other governments, particularly the threat of economic and other sanctions under the TVPA and the anti-prostitution pledge, the Cambodian government promulgated the Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in February 2008 (Sandy 2012). The criminalization of sex work under the Human Trafficking Law, which expressly adopted the US government's policy of eradication, saw sex workers arrested and brothels closed down, as brothel raids and rescues became the major form of intervention in the country. These, along with the forced rehabilitation of sex workers, became the major, if not only, form of intervention in trafficking in the country.[13] As Wijers (1998) has noted, these kinds of repressive strategies are often most attractive to governments and have the tendency to end up working against women instead of in their favour, as the focus on eradication provides little impetus to address and transform abusive practices in the sex industry.

In partnership with the APNSW and the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP, a network founded in 1991 by sex workers and based in London), the WNU began campaigning against the Human Trafficking Law.[14] Protests were staged by Cambodian sex workers and their supporters in Australia, the UK and the US. On 4 June 2008, WNU coordinated a National Day of Action, including a protest attended by more than 500 sex workers who called for the repeal of the law. Video-taped testimonies of police abuses were publically aired at the protest (*Phnom Penh Post* 2008). Ironically, the US government released the 2008 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report the following day, in which they praised Cambodia for its fierce crackdowns on brothels and declared that the 14 million dollars the US had pumped into anti-trafficking measures in Cambodia since 2003 was now paying off (Department of State 2008). Cambodia was elevated from Tier Three to Two – a position the country had not occupied since 2004 – thus removing the threat of economic and other sanctions.

Sex workers around the globe continued their protests against the violation of Cambodian sex workers rights – including physical and sexual assault, extortion and forced detention – under the Human Trafficking Law. Locally, sex workers

gathered at a temple to pray for the law to be repealed. Protests were also held at the UN high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS in New York. Multi-media productions were released, including a series of documentaries and short films that featured the stories of sex workers' experiences of police violence, abuse and extortion in their implementation of the new laws. One of these documentaries, produced by the WNU and APNSW, was screened at the 2008 International AIDS Society Conference in Mexico (WNU and APNSW 2008).[15]

The campaign gained further momentum with a protest by sex workers in front of Phnom Penh's Olympic Stadium, where 35,000 people had gathered to see the last in a series of concerts held across the country as part of MTV EXIT (End Exploitation and Trafficking) on Cambodia's National Anti-Trafficking Day in December 2008. MTV EXIT is one of several high-profile anti-trafficking campaigns which focus on Cambodia and other countries in the region. Others include the Body Shop's 'Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People' campaign, which comes complete with its own 'Soft Hands, Kind Heart' hand cream, with proceeds from the sale going to End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) International.[16] MTV EXIT began with MTV Europe in 2004, expanding to include MTV Asia-Pacific in 2008, in partnership with USAID. It featured a series of high-profile events, including rock concerts with top-selling international and regional artists. Multi-media productions included a series of documentaries that featured the stories women trafficked for sex work, including Cambodian women.

In response to MTV EXIT, the WNU launched the 'NO EXIT: Stop Trafficking and Decriminalize Sex Work' campaign. The WNU's core claim was that the MTV EXIT campaign failed to involve local sex workers because it had received funding from USAID, and the US funding restrictions had imposed a position of opposition to sex work and thus effectively 'gagged' MTV.[17] NO EXIT also served as a platform from which to protest against the gross violation of sex worker rights under the Human Trafficking Law, which positions sex workers as criminals. Local sex workers demanded that the law be repealed, that police raids and their forced rehabilitation cease, and that sex work be recognized as work and sex workers as workers. In response to global collective action in support of these demands, the US government downgraded Cambodia to the Tier Two Watch List in the 2009 TIP report (APNSW 2009). The US also strongly reprimanded Cambodia for the conflation of sex work and sex trafficking in the legislation and its enforcement (Department of State 2009).[18] Sadly, in Cambodia itself, this reprimand has had little effect, with Prime Minister Hun Sen calling in 2010 for increased efforts to eradicate brothels, nightclubs and karaoke parlours as part of the nation's counter-trafficking efforts (*Phnom Penh Post* 2010).

Conclusion

While much of the World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights may have been defined by Northern sex workers, it documents the recognition of sex work as a profession as a key claim of the now-global movement. It is unclear whether the WNU's call

for the decriminalization of sex work reflected the adoption (under pressure or otherwise) of this key claim of the international sex worker rights movement, or if it was the product of the evolution of local strategy. In 2002 – before the WNU began engaging with actors from the international movement and exposure to its political aims – WNU activists had endorsed a model of geographical centralization of private businesses owned and operated by and for sex workers in purpose-specific zones. This model had been developed by local activists and supporters in 2000, its proponents arguing that it addressed questions surrounding their 'exploitation by others' in the country's Constitution, the only legal text that came close to outlawing sex work before the passage of the Human Trafficking Law.

Debates nevertheless persist about the extent to which Cambodian sex workers' engagement with their international counterparts has been on (or in) their own terms. Some scholars and journalists have attempted to negate the importance of this movement and question its claims to authenticity by attributing sex worker collective action to outsiders, usually an expatriate (Cha 2006; Cohen 2004). However, as I have shown here, the sustained campaigning of local sex worker organizations and the legacy of their years of collective action and organizing challenges this very idea. Sex worker activists argue that efforts to address the force and deception that sex workers experience should focus on unfree labour, not on sex work *per se*. By taking this approach, ways can be found to enhance sex workers' health, safety and control over the work process and conditions. International influences clearly exist – whether they be from the United Nations, the US government or from global and regional sex worker networks. The question is, then, not so much one of where ideas have come from, but on the extent to which they recognize the lived realities of Cambodian sex workers.

Notes

1 The quotes in this vignette are from the *Phnom Penh Post* (2002a: 14).
2 The literature and data search undertaken for this paper involved desk-based research on the sex workers' rights movement in Cambodia and internationally, observations from fieldwork in Cambodia undertaken from November 2001 to April 2004, and volunteer work from August 2000 to January 2001.
3 The early years of this movement have been documented by Bell (1987) and Delacoste and Alexander (1998). Since then, other key authors that have chronicled the history of this movement include Bell (1994), Chapkis (1997), Jenness (1993), Nagel (1997), Pheterson (1989) and Roberts (1993).
4 The decriminalization of sex work has been an important political strategy in the industrialized North. For example, in Australia it has been possible to implement decriminalization policies because local Councils are responsible for the regulation of businesses through by-laws and relevant occupational health and safety legislation enacted and implemented by state governments, which are crucial in achieving the necessary legal protections and safer working environments for sex workers. This kind of legislation, infrastructure and oversight is virtually non-existent in Cambodia, and as such, it is hard to envision a mechanism for the operationalization of decriminalization policies.
5 The dominance of the North was also reflected in the academic literature from this period and, as Kempadoo (1998: 20) argues, this continued to reproduce a skewed

representation of the movement, promoting the view that sex worker rights groups in developing countries were at best marginal.

6 For an extended discussion of this process, see Ford et al. (2012).

7 I borrow the term 'abolitionist feminist' from Weitzer (2007: 450), who uses it to describe feminist groups and activists who view sex work as sexual exploitation and 'argue that the sex industry should be entirely eliminated because of its objectification and oppressive treatment of women, considered to be inherent in sex for sale'. Key lobby groups that have an on-the-ground presence in Cambodia include Acting for Women in Distressing Circumstances (Agir Pour les Femmes en Situation Précaire, AFESIP), Childwise (formerly ECPAT Australia and a member of ECPAT International) and the International Justice Mission (IJM). While the US-based Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) has written about Cambodia, the organization has no programmes in the country.

8 The 'tiers', accorded on the extent to which the government complies with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking (defined by the US), are: Tier One, government fully compliant; Tier Two, government is making significant effort to meet the minimum standards; and Tier Three, government does not comply with the minimum standards and is not making efforts to do so. In addition, there is the 'Tier Two Watch List', which a country is placed on if the number of trafficked persons is significant or increasing and the government has failed to increase their efforts to combat trafficking. In 2008 amendments, any country on the Tier Two Watch List for two consecutive years is automatically downgraded to Tier Three. Countries can be upgraded from Tier Three to the Tier Two Watch List if the US government deems that the country is about to make significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards outlined in the TVPA (see Department of State 2009).

9 This pledge was included in the 2003 amendments to the TVPA (United States Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act 2003).

10 Cambodia is a post-authoritarian and hierarchically structured society and independence and autonomy from local NGOs remains a significant issue for local sex worker activists.

11 Similar perspectives have been documented in the Riau Islands (Ford and Lyons 2008, 2011).

12 The double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial involved researchers from the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and NCHADS, with funding from the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The trial protocol received approval from the National Ethics Committee for Health Research (Cambodia), and the human research ethics committees at UNSW and UCSF. The multi-country study included sites in Cambodia, Cameroon and Nigeria.

13 For a detailed discussion of the passing of the law and its effects on sex workers, see Sandy (2012).

14 According to Kempadoo (1998), the NWSP has attempted to forge links and form alliances with sex worker organizations in Asia and the Pacific as part of efforts to truly globalize since its inception.

15 Responding to pressure, the government issued guidelines on enforcement of the law in October 2008, as demanded by the protesters. However, these guidelines were not only problematic but have had little effect in practice.

16 In the 2011 phase of its campaign, the Body Shop urged shoppers to contribute their ideas to help stop child sex trafficking for the chance to win an adventure to Cambodia. The poster for this promotion featured a young person pictured from behind sitting on a bamboo raft, presumably on the Mekong River. The image draws on and reinforces assumptions about women's and children's natural vulnerability and passivity and associates Cambodia with paedophilia and the trafficking of women and children, and

girls in particular, in global circuits of sex, commerce and travel. Childwise is a major supporter and beneficiary of the campaign.

17 Such 'gagging' was evident in the local NGO sector, which effectively silenced NGO opposition to the law.

18 This abrupt about-face also reflected another shift in US policy following the election of President Obama.

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11 Sexuality rights activism in Malaysia

The case of Seksualiti Merdeka

Julian C. H. Lee

The region in which Malaysia is situated was historically one of significant sexual diversity, marked by 'relative tolerance and indulgence with respect to things erotic and sexual' (Peletz 2006: 312; see also Andaya 2000; Boellstorff 2005; Davies 2007). Yet despite a history of cultural acceptance of sexual diversity, contemporary Malaysia has marginalized non-heterosexual identities and criminalized non-heterosexual and extra-marital sexual behaviours. This has led to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals and communities enduring arrest and state-sanctioned punishments.[1] The concurrent demonization of these non-normative behaviours and identities has led to moral panics in the media and also to assaults, some leading to serious injuries, by both vigilantes and those in official positions who take licence with the powers that their positions afford (Amnesty International 2007). The inability for individuals from sexual minorities to live without fear, in particular from state actors such as the police, has significantly impaired their ability to obtain and maintain a reasonable quality of life owing to, among other things, consistent harassment, especially of transgendered individuals (Equal Rights Trust 2011).

It was in the context of perceived increases in the demonization and criminalization of non-normative sexuality that some members of LGBT communities in Malaysia began seeking ways to protect sexuality-related rights.[2] Although many LGBT individuals were part of Malaysia's activist community, social activism in support of sexuality rights was slow to emerge. In this semi-democratic, overtly religious context, where women's rights and other human rights groups faced significant obstacles, it has been strategically difficult to openly advocate for sexuality rights.[3] Nevertheless, the new millennium has seen a greater willingness by some Malaysians to speak out against rights abuses of LGBT individuals and to advocate for greater respect for sexuality-related rights. While some of this advocacy has made use of and has taken place within other extant frames in Malaysia, such as the longer standing women's movement, sexuality-related rights have begun to become articulated more explicitly in terms of LGBT rights in and of themselves.

Most prominent in Malaysia's movement to advance the rights of sexual minorities is Seksualiti Merdeka (Sexuality Independence), a loose, non-institutionalized collection of individuals which works together to undertake a

number of activities, principally an annual festival by the same name. This festival began in 2008, when it ran over the same weekend as Malaysia's 51st anniversary of independence from British colonial rule. Over the next three years, Seksualiti Merdeka gained significant positive media attention and created an important space in which discussions about sexuality-related issues could be addressed. Through careful use of artistic spaces and forums, strong alliance building and reference to international human and sexuality rights norms, it succeeded in bringing together diverse communities and individuals and helped enrich the sexuality rights discourse in Malaysia.

This chapter positions a discussion of what Seksualiti Merdeka has achieved in view of Malaysia's strong state and its highly conservative state-sanctioned Islamic structures. The chapter begins by describing how – despite Malaysia's historically permissive attitude towards sexuality – non-heterosexuality became criminalized. Following this, I describe how the activities of Seksualiti Merdeka advanced acceptance of sexuality-rights in Malaysia using international norms, including the Yogyakarta Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. I then explain how, despite having avoided unwanted attention from state actors in its first three years, Seksualiti Merdeka became the focus of considerable negative media attention in 2010 and 2011 and was subsequently banned by the Malaysian police. The chapter concludes with some observations on the role of international norms, the difficult negotiations that must take place in navigating a complex terrain in which conservative morality is supported by a legally empowered and socio-politically entrenched religion, and the impact this has on the manner in which sexuality rights are promoted in Malaysia.

Challenging conservative local norms

Seksualiti Merdeka has sought to advance the social and legal acceptance of sexual diversity in Malaysia through reference to the international arena, where legal norms and a discourse of equality support liberal attitudes towards sexual diversity and condemn legal sanctions against sexual minorities. In contrast to this international arena, where developments have been contested but generally positive, within Malaysia the socio-political and legal climate is hostile to sexual minorities, reflecting growing conservatism and resulting in increasing prosecution of sexual 'transgressions'. Sexual minority individuals of all ethno-religious groups are subject to social and state policing of their sexuality, and the condemnation of non-normative sexuality is not always couched in Islamic terms. However, as many of the laws criminalizing non-normative sexuality apply only to Muslim Malaysians, Muslim Malay individuals are especially subject to moral policing with regard to their sexuality.

Official hostility towards sexual minorities and towards non-marital sex is grounded in discourses that juxtapose local values and prevailing cultural norms – in particular conservative Islam – with the ostensibly corrupting influence of foreign, and particularly Western, values. The West is positioned as being

permissive of sexual conduct, of having values that erode family and social life and, importantly, as unduly influencing the culture and moral behaviour of Malaysians. This influence is said to undermine the fabric of Malaysian society, of endangering the 'traditional' family unit, and heralding other social and medical 'ills' such as homosexuality, promiscuity and sexually transmitted diseases. Attempts to stem the perceived tide of moral laxity in Malaysia have taken a variety of forms, including the promotion of nationalist or regionalist discourses about (conservative and heterosexual) 'Asian values', Syariah laws that criminalize homosexual and transgender conduct, legally enforceable fatwas, and moral panics in which the threats posed by one or another sexual minority to society are propounded in the media.

Ironically, homosexuality was criminalized not as a result of local imperatives but on the behest of Malaysia's former colonizers. Although a range of laws criminalize consensual sexual behaviour, those that attract the heaviest potential punishments are coded under Section 377 of the Penal Code, a legacy of British colonial rule. Malaysia shares this legacy with other Commonwealth countries in which the Penal Code drafted by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1837 for India became replicated. India's 1837 Penal Code included Section 377, which described 'Unnatural Offences' that were 'against the order of nature' and which may potentially be punished with life imprisonment (see Lee 2011a: 125–9).[4] In the Malaysian Penal Code, Section 377A states that 'Any person who has sexual connection with another person by the introduction of the penis into the anus or mouth of the other person is said to commit carnal intercourse against the order of nature.' Section 377B goes on to assert that any such act 'shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to twenty years, and shall also be liable to whipping'. It was under Section 377B and 377C of the Penal Code that Anwar Ibrahim was charged with sodomy in 1998 and again in 2008, at times when Anwar posed a significant political challenge to the ruling regime. In 1998, when he was Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar was charged under these sections when he sought to oust then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (see Stewart 2003). Ten years later, he was arrested again under 377B and 377C just four months after Pakatan Rakyat (the People's Pact) – the coalition of opposition parties led by Anwar – made significant gains in Malaysia 2008 General Elections and appeared to pose a credible threat to the ruling coalition's ongoing rule (see Lee 2011b: 124).

After Malaysia achieved independence in 1957, further criminalization of other non-heterosexual and non-marital sexual behaviours occurred primarily through Syariah law, which applies only to those Malaysians who are administratively recognized as Muslim. For example, the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 criminalizes 'sexual intercourse between a man and a woman out of wedlock' (*zina*), 'sexual relations between female persons' (*musahaqah*), 'sexual relations between male persons' (*liwat*), along with non-heteronormative expressions of gender.[5] It is under cross-dressing provisions in the Syariah Criminal Acts that transgender individuals are frequently arrested. Teh (2001) has described how transgender Malaysians have been harassed by

police and officers from state religious departments, been forced into paying bribes and granting sexual favours, as well as being charged. In late 2010, a court case was launched by transgender individuals challenging Syariah laws that criminalize cross-dressing in the state of Negeri Sembilan. Transgendered people, referred to locally as *Mak Nyah*, have been subjected to increasing arbitrary arrests, being frequently groped and made to strip, and often by officers with no identification and who do not follow appropriate procedures (see Hariati 2011).

The marginalization of sexual minorities in Malaysia does not occur wholly with reference to Islam, however. Discourses demonizing non-hetero and non-marital sexual behaviours were entrenched in the 1980s and 1990s, with the 'Asian Values' discourse. As part of their assertion of Asian Values, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir portrayed Asia as a region where 'traditional' heterosexual family values prevailed. The West, meanwhile, was a source of moral degeneracy, whence 'social ills' such as homosexuality, incest and single-parenthood proliferated and which had affected Malaysian society (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995: 80–1; see also Peletz 2002: 239–76). If Asia did nothing to stem the influence of the West, its 'moral foundations' would similarly 'crumble', and psychological 'decay' and 'stress' would result from 'sensual gratification' and 'diminished respect for marriage [and] family values' (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995: 80–1).

During this time, and subsequently, there have been periodic moral panics about homosexuality. In view of these concerns, state muftis and the Majlis Fatwa Kebangsaan (National Fatwa Council), a body composed of all the state muftis which meets periodically, have delivered fatwa that declare as *haram* various practices such as celebrating St Valentine's Day, men being 'house-husbands' while wives go to work, and tomboyish behaviour in women. In Malaysia fatwas issued at the state or territory level carry the weight of law and, as the Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment 2001 for the state of Terengganu states, 'Any person who gives, propagates or disseminates any opinion . . . contrary to any *fatwa* . . . shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding three thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both' (see Lee 2010a).[6]

This legislative environment poses significant challenges to those seeking to promote either women's rights and/or sexuality rights. Women's rights activists, for example, have struggled to have recognized the crime of marital rape in Syariah law because conservative Muslim authorities, such as the Mufti of Perak, Harussani Zakaria, regards refusing a husband sex as constituting a level of disobedience that means 'the husband is not required to provide financial assistance to her' (cited in Kent 2004; see also Lee 2010b: 125). The promotion of the rights of sexual minorities – for whom supportive social and religious discourses are far less well developed or generally less well known – is therefore even more difficult. As a result, most efforts to serve LGBT communities and individuals in Malaysia have primarily focused on less controversial issues such as health.

One of most effective frames for this work has been that of HIV/AIDS, adopted by the PT Foundation (formerly Pink Triangle), which provides services for men

who have sex with men, transgendered individuals, and sex workers, among others. Indeed, as Peletz has noted:

> The ethically neutral, medicalized, 'social work'-style terminology deployed [by the PT Foundation] to refer to these communities is noteworthy for being more or less identical to the terminology employed by similarly oriented NGOs in Sydney, San Francisco, Johannesburg, and Rio de Janeiro. This is to say that it is part and parcel of an increasingly global discourse bearing on sexualities, bodily practices, and desires in the age of AIDS.
>
> (Peletz 2009: 234)

The work of the PT Foundation and the Malaysian AIDS Council was important in creating spaces for LGBT communities to gather and organize (see Weiss 2006), although some activists had reservations about the HIV/AIDS frame – in particular, its inability to capture the spectrum of ways in which non-heterosexual identities can be experienced or made manifest.

Other groups have emerged to advance sexuality rights in different ways or have sought to include sexuality rights in its remit, although not necessarily putting it at the forefront of their work. In the latter are feminist groups in Malaysia such as the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), which is composed of several women's rights NGOs. An important perspective that guided JAG's thinking in the late 2000s was a legal rights framework based on the principle of non-discrimination. While such a perspective had its limitations with respect to the kinds of rights it could protect or argue for, in 2006 JAG collaborated with the Gender Studies Programme of Universiti Malaya to organize the first annual Fiesta Feminista, which sought to popularize feminism in Malaysia and to introduce it to young women. While not openly challenging heteronormativity in Malaysia, many of the activities in Fiesta Feminista have addressed issues relating to sexuality rights.[7]

However, the most notable exemplar in Malaysia of a group or movement that does declaratively support the rights of sexually diverse communities and individuals is Seksualiti Merdeka, which conducts its work largely within an annual sexuality-rights festival. It is to a description of this movement's activities and perspectives that I now turn.

Seksualiti Merdeka

Seksualiti Merdeka was co-founded in 2008 by Pang Khee Teik and Jerome Kugan, who both worked at the Annexe Gallery, which is adjacent to the popular art and craft market in Kuala Lumpur, the Central Market. In the face of the relentlessly negative public portrayals of LGBT individuals, they and a few others came together to discuss what could be done (Interview with Pang, Kuala Lumpur, November 2010). The result was an annual sexuality rights festival, the name of which sought to draw parallels between Malaysia's journey to gain autonomy from British rule – and its disempowering practices and discourses – and the

journey LGBT individuals and communities must undertake in order to be free from repression and to gain greater empowerment, acceptance and respect for their fundamental rights as both human beings and Malaysians. While subsequent events were held at different times, the first Seksualiti Merdeka event's coincidence with Malaysia's Independence Day on 31 August was a reference to the way the Malaysian nation should be imagined – as enabling the sovereignty of individuals over their bodies, just as Malaysia gained its own sovereignty.

In that first year, the festival's aims were to affirm sexuality rights as human rights, and to empower individuals and communities. In Pang's words:

> We also wanted to create platforms for advocacy of sexuality rights, which we feel are relevant to everyone: heterosexuals, LGBTs, women, men, married, singles, young and old, even those who don't like sex . . . and those who don't like labels. We did a number of things in that first year like [hold] forums on discrimination, presentations on sexual diversity, talks on the law, as well as concerts to celebrate the community coming together.
>
> (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, November 2010)

For Pang, sexuality rights activism through art was a definite part of the story of how Seksualiti Merdeka's criticism of sexuality rights in Malaysia was able to begin with relatively little in the way of a backlash. In Pang's view, the use of an art gallery as the venue for Seksualiti Merdeka and the framing of many of the pro-sexuality rights activities as artistic performances made it possible for elements of the Malaysian media to cover the event positively in its first three years. Pang believes that in other circumstances, the media 'would not have felt able to cover SM [Seksualiti Merdeka], or would have covered it negatively, [but were able] to take a positive spin because they were able to frame their articles in terms of it being an artistic event and to place the articles in the art sections of newspapers' (Pang Khee Teik 2011). Although Malaysian newspapers are beholden to dominant political parties (see Means 1996), the fact that positive media coverage in some the mainstream press – predominantly the English language press – was possible suggests that, although they may be few and fraught, there were spaces that may be found for creatively advancing otherwise difficult agendas even in difficult contexts such as Malaysia.

Until its banning in 2011, Seksualiti Merdeka featured installations and performances of various types, although its programme of events has evolved over the years, reflecting Seksualiti Merdeka's role as a facilitating space in which interested individuals and groups can run events that contribute to the advancement of sexuality-related rights or community empowerment.[8] Among these activities were screenings of relevant films. An example of this was a set of films titled *HerStory*, which focused on explorations of female sexuality by women filmmakers, shown in 2010. Also part of the 2010 programme was an art exhibit featuring the families of Seksualiti Merdeka members who sought to address questions about the acceptance of LGBT individuals by their families and to problematize the heterosexual and nuclear interpretation of 'the family'. Music was

also an important element of Seksualiti Merdeka. In 2008, a session titled *Malaysian Artists For Diversity* featured Malaysian musicians who spoke and sang in support of LGBT rights (for further details, see Lee 2008). In subsequent years, song and performance featured increasingly, perhaps most prominently in the event Rainbow Massacre, when various Malaysian artists interpreted 'massacred' songs, often 'gay anthems', in order to draw out themes and sentiments that are supportive of sexuality rights.

Through comedy, rousing anthems and heartfelt musical expression, Rainbow Massacre succeeded in helping to give the audience (around 1,000 people over the three nights of the festival in 2010) a sense of belonging and community. In an email to Seksualiti Merdeka, which was posted anonymously on its website, a young man who had been rejected by his family wrote that:

> Just last year a friend of mine invited me to a 'gay thing' in KL and it sounded interesting to me because i have never been to any so expecting nothing i went. the minute i was there, there were so many people like me around and for once its not in a club. rainbow massacre changed my life that night because of what it stands for. the message it was giving out to suicidal, people who faces objection from coming out to their parents, rejection from the community for being different and intimidated from being afraid of what the world thinks of them. and here these people are boldly speaking out and promoting and fighting for our freedom to love one another.
>
> (Seksualiti Merdeka 2011a; quotation is unedited)

As this email suggests, it was not only the space that Seksualiti Merdeka offered that was important, but also that there is a need for the mixture of formats of which Seksualiti Merdeka made use. Whereas the young man concerned may have experienced membership of the gay community elsewhere, the fact that 'for once its not in a club' implies that other spaces, such as clubs, may not provide the same sense of validation and opportunity for self-expression that the writer encountered in his experience of Seksualiti Merdeka.

Where Rainbow Massacre was able to generate an emotional sense of belonging, other activities in the Seksualiti Merdeka programme sought to improve the capacities of LGBT communities by creating networks across the country. In 2010, a workshop brought in representatives from transgendered communities in different Malaysian states to discuss issues such as access to employment and police harassment. They also sought to establish a network on which they could draw when individuals in a given city encountered discrimination or violence. Another workshop focused on 'coming out', creating space for a discussion of the benefits and the difficulties in being openly non-heterosexual, and how individuals can minimize negative effects of coming out on themselves and their families. A forum entitled 'Even Educated Fleas Do It' discussed academic research on sexual diversity and debunked harmful myths, such as that the natural (non-human) world was fundamentally heterosexual and that, therefore, homosexuality was deviant and 'against the order of nature' (see Yeoh and Lee 2011; Lee 2010c).[9]

Workshops were also run by lawyers, educating participants about the powers of the police, and their rights and entitlements upon arrest.

Seksualiti Merdeka consistently deployed discourses relating to international human rights norms, especially the Yogyakarta Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity (O'Flaherty and Fisher 2008). The twenty-nine Yogyakarta Principles include for example the right of individuals of all sexualities and gender identities to peaceful assembly and association (Principle 20) and the right to found a family (Principle 24). These principles are distilled from internationally agreed human rights principles and precedents in international law. As Sanders (2008) puts it, they are 'a statement of what international human rights law says at this point in time on LGBTI issues *if we take the basic principles of universality and non-discrimination seriously* [emphasis in the original]'. In the inaugural festival, the Yogyakarta Principles were emphasized and hand-outs describing them were freely available. The theme of the second festival, 'Our Bodies, Our Rights', continued to underscore the importance of this document in framing the ways the rights of members of Malaysia's LGBT community were frequently violated. In 2010, when the slogan was 'We are family', particular note was made of the relevant principles, especially Principle 24, which describes the right to found a family.

Although Malaysia has a poor track record of recognizing international human rights norms, such references to them do have some utility. On the one hand, Malaysia is a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which does not prevent the government from applying its own standards, but does put it in an awkward position in overtly denying internationally recognized human rights. On the other, human rights norms and laws have traction with segments of the Malaysian population who may support other human rights (including those of refugees or the disabled, for example). Indeed, by its third year, Seksualiti Merdeka received official support from the Malaysian Bar Council and its Human Rights Committee. Other high-profile local human rights organizations, including Suaram and Amnesty International Malaysia, have provided public or financial support for Seksualiti Merdeka. The event was also supported by the United Nations Theme Group on HIV. The backing of such organizations meant that any police or government action against Seksualiti Merdeka would inevitably involve other organizations that had either considerable legal skills or moral weight.

The Yogyakarta Principles served as a framework for articulating rights which, based on international law, are due to Malaysians and which have been violated regularly. The document's twenty-nine principles also featured in Seksualiti Merdeka events including the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO). In 2011, Sexuality Merdeka organized an event for the 29 May, which included, among others things, the screening of the movie *Courage Unfolds* (Seksualiti Merdeka 2011b). This film was screened in the same month by numerous organizations across Asia and describes LGBT rights activism in Asia and the Yogyakarta Principles.[10] Among the important messages in *Courage Unfolds* is that the Yogyakarta Principles were established in Southeast Asia, specifically in Indonesia – the world's most populous Muslim nation – and that in view of this

and the traditions of sexual diversity in Southeast Asia, citizens of the region ought all the more clearly to enjoy greater sexuality rights.

Seksualiti Merdeka also used this occasion to unveil and to promote its '29 Ways towards an LGBTIQ-friendly Malaysia':[11]

> Why 29 Ways? Because we want to pay tribute to the 29 Yogyakarta Principles, on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. On Sunday May 29 2011, we stand in solidarity with people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity across Malaysia and the world.
>
> The global movement toward recognising of LGBTIQ rights is unstoppable now. Countries that still penalise homosexuality are in the minority, even in Asia. Since the first IDAHO in 2006, countries that have decriminalised homosexuality include Nepal, India, Fiji, Nicaragua, Panama, Kosovo, Vanuatu, Niue & Tokelau (part of the realm of New Zealand). Malaysia has to do the same.
>
> (Seksualiti Merdeka 2011b)

Yet while Seksualiti Merdeka has made reference to global human rights norms, the network has not sought to engage with religion. Moral conservatism is strong in all the major religious traditions in Malaysia and thus there is relatively little traction in publically advocating for LGBT-friendly understandings of religion – something which could well result in a broad religious coalition of condemnation of Seksualiti Merdeka and sexual minorities. Moreover, the experience of the implicitly heterosexual Muslim feminist organization, Sisters in Islam, which suffers ongoing and sometimes vicious criticism for its liberal views (e.g. Nair 2007), suggests that supportive discussions about homosexuality in Islamic terms would be quite beyond the pale. Organizers were also concerned that the conservative Malay-language media would react negatively to any such engagement – a concern which, as described later, was well-founded. Furthermore, as noted earlier, Seksualiti Merdeka's emphasis has thus been on empowering communities, and less on public advocacy. It is perhaps because of this focus – along with its emphasis on artistic expression – that Seksualiti Merdeka experienced a remarkable absence of negative attention in its first three years, either from the State or in the media.[12] However, this all changed after the 2010 Seksualiti Merdeka festival.

The beginning of the end?

In late 2010, considerable negative media attention was generated by an attempt by some of those involved in Seksualiti Merdeka to participate in the worldwide It Gets Better Project. Videos produced as part of the project feature ordinary and famous individuals, along with representatives from high-profile organizations such as Google, seeking to support young people who are discovering their

homosexuality. They spread the message that, although being young and gay can be difficult, that things improve and that young gay people are not alone.[13]

The *YouTube* video that sparked the furore in Malaysia featured a gay Muslim Malay man who talked about the difficulties of being gay and his hopes that one day gay Malaysians would be able to say 'Saya gay, saya okay' (I'm gay, I'm okay). Although other videos featuring non-Muslim Malaysians were released without incident, the video featuring the young Malay man prompted a flurry of responses. Along with some 150,000 *YouTube* hits and many comments (both supportive and disapproving) in the blogosphere, the video attracted harsh condemnation in the Malay Press (see Pang Khee Teik 2010). Among other things, it was suggested by some that the religious authorities of Malaysia should arrest the man and to take his video as a 'confession' of illegal sexual activity.[14] But it was threats to the man's safety and his life that finally forced Seksualiti Merdeka to take down the *YouTube* video. Of particular concern was one blogger who asserted that Islam demands that homosexuals be put to death (see Shah 2011).

Seksualiti Merdeka's initial response to this unexpected attention was to lie low until the storm passed.[15] Almost certainly as a result of the incident, the Department of Islam for the Federal Territories (Jabatan Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan) issued a letter titled 'Seeking confirmation of support for seksualitimerdeka.org and the LGBT movement' to some of the organizations that had officially supported Seksualiti Merdeka in 2010. Issued on 29 March 2011, the letter quoted text from Seksualiti Merdeka's website that describes the LGBT movement's values before going on to seek verification that those organizations supported it. Recipients of the letter and other members of Seksualiti Merdeka were only able to speculate on what lay behind it. Some felt that it was merely a letter of enquiry. Another possibility mooted was that the Department of Islam for the Federal Territories was attempting to gauge the level of civil society support for Seksualiti Merdeka. A more worrying hypothesis was that it was seeking written evidence that these organizations supported the LGBT rights movement and Seksualiti Merdeka. Activists feared that such written evidence could be used at a later date to deregister organizations. Only the Malaysian AIDS Council is known to have replied to this letter and did so only by restating the areas in which it operates and which it is on record as working on as a registered organization.

However, in November 2011 Seksualiti Merdeka was forced to respond. Two days after the first events in the 2011 programme commenced, the Malaysian police banned the organization. Deputy-Inspector General of the Police, Khalid Abu Bakar, cited Section 27A(1)(C) of the Police Act and Section 298A of the Penal Code as the grounds for the decision. The first of these acts enables police to stop an activity that is 'likely to be prejudicial to the interest of the security of Malaysia or any part thereof or to excite a disturbance of the peace'. Section 298A of the Penal Code, meanwhile, describes as an offence activities that cause 'disharmony, disunity, or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will, or [that prejudice] the maintenance of harmony or unity, on the grounds of religion'. The police action was precipitated, according to Khalid, by 28 police reports made against

Seksualiti Merdeka by, among others, Islamic, Christian and Buddhist groups (Aw 2011). Within a week, the number of police reports against Seksualiti Merdeka had risen to 154 (Prakash 2011). Just prior to the banning on 3 November, coverage of the event in the Malay-language media was vitriolic, particularly in *Utusan Malaysia*, which is closely linked to the ruling United Malays National Organisation (Brown 2005; Mohd Azizudin 2007).[16]

By the time Seksualiti Merdeka was banned, two festival events had already taken place. These events were forums that discussed the ways that sexuality rights might be advanced in Malaysia and were held at the Annexe Gallery and the building of the Malaysian Bar Council. On 3 November, the day the ban was announced, a forum titled 'Nine to Five: Sexuality Rights in the Workplace' was scheduled to take place. Although aware of the banning, those involved in Seksualiti Merdeka decided to proceed with the event. One reason for this was that the announcement of the ban had referred to Seksualiti Merdeka's programme as running from November 9 to 13 (Aw 2011). A further reason was that Seksualiti Merdeka regarded the 3 November event as closed-door and invitation only, and thus not a public event that the police could interfere with. However, it was also decided that, should there be an attempt to shut it down, the event would be called off without resistance.

As those involved in the event approached the venue, it was clear that there were numerous members of the Malaysian police present. When some individuals tried to close the large glass panel doors of the venue, the police ordered the event to be stopped. The 40 or so people intending to attend the event dispersed shortly after being ordered to do so. Over the next days, the rhetoric and vitriol from some quarters of the media escalated amid calls for prosecution and promises from the police that Seksualiti Merdeka would be investigated. The most incendiary remarks came from Ibrahim Ali of the Malay organization, Perkasa, who described Seksualiti Merdeka as a threat to national security. Perkasa Youth Chief, Irwan Fahmi Ideris, was also reported as saying at an anti-Seksualiti Merdeka protest on 4 November that 'Supporting gays and lesbians will destroy our country' and vowing to stop it to 'the last drop of blood'. The same protest also called for the arrest under the Internal Security Act (which enables arrests without trial for renewable periods of two years) of Ambiga Sreenevasan, who had been slated to launch Seksualiti Merdeka on 9 November.

It is this call that is perhaps the best clue as to why Seksualiti Merdeka's November 2011 festival caused such a furore. In previous years, Seksualiti Merdeka's programme had been launched by high-profile human rights supporters in Malaysia, including columnist Marina Mahathir in 2009 and lawyer Edmund Bon in 2010. Ambiga, a former president of the Malaysian Bar Council, was the head of the electoral reform movement called Bersih, a civil society coalition that promotes reform of electoral practices (see Welsh 2011; also Rodan, this volume). It includes as members non-government organizations and the main opposition political parties, notably Anwar Ibrahim's People's Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Rakyat); the Democratic Action Party (a Chinese dominated secularist party); and the Islamic Party of Malaysia (Parti Islam SeMalaysia). In addition to

delegitimizing Bersih, the linking of Ambiga and Seksualiti Merdeka put pressure on Parti Islam SeMalaysia to reject both Ambiga and Bersih because of her support for gay and lesbian rights.

In the absence of concrete evidence, it is unlikely that it will ever be known with certainty why the furore emerged in 2011. Given the fallout over the 'Saya gay, saya okay' incident, the festival may well have attracted more scrutiny irrespective of who launched the opening night. Whatever the trigger for the banning of Seksualiti Merdeka, activists were left facing questions about the future of the movement and the festival – and for sexuality rights activism in general. Was it the beginning of the end for Seksualiti Merdeka? Or perhaps just the end of an initial phase, as circumstances require it to move into new areas of more public advocacy and contestation?

Conclusion

Although Seksualiti Merdeka's future is unclear, its impact on the promotion of sexuality rights in Malaysia is incontrovertible. From 2008 to 2011, it was the principal site for the public articulation of sexuality rights and an important community-building space for LGBT communities. During this three-year period it trod carefully, working strategically with a broad suite of local, national and international resources. Activists for the most part succeeded in navigating the fraught social, political and legal terrain through strategic use of apparently innocuous artistic spaces and forms. Their sophisticated discourses and alliance-building strategies acquired both through experience and from sympathetic activists working in other areas over a longer period of time enabled Seksualiti Merdeka to operate in relative safety for three years before falling victim to moral panic and, perhaps, political machination.

An important part of Seksualiti Merdeka's advocacy work was its use of international rights-based discourses. Seksualiti Merdeka's engagement with the Yogyakarta Principles and of transnational events like IDAHO situated Seksualiti Merdeka's work within an international frame, which provided an alternative to hostile national narratives about homosexuality. Moreover, by firmly anchoring its advocacy for greater sexuality-related rights in the Yogyakarta Principles, Seksualiti Merdeka tethered the LGBT rights movement to developments in international rights and standards, many of which Malaysia is either legally or morally obliged to respect. This appeal to international human rights norms also underpinned the legitimacy accorded to it by its association with organizations such as the Malaysian Bar Council and the United Nations Theme Group on HIV.

While constituting a direct threat to Seksualiti Merdeka, the events of November 2011 served as a catalyst for further mainstreaming of sexuality rights within Malaysian human rights discourse. Among those who expressed support for Seksualiti Merdeka's right to have a space for dialogue (if not their specific objectives) were Malaysian rights organizations such as Suaram, the Women's Candidacy Initiative and Lawyers for Liberty. Other groups that spoke in defence of Seksualiti Merdeka included the Islamic Renaissance Front and the Malaysian

Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism. Significantly, also, leading figures in Parti Keadilan Rakyat, including Anwar Ibrahim, supported Seksualiti Merdeka's right to exist (Pathmawathy 2011), as did Charles Santiago of the Democratic Action Party (Santiago 2011). And although Parti Islam SeMalaysia continues to regard homosexuality as wrong, its Selangor branch stated that 'PAS Selangor takes an open stand and is willing to have a discussion and dialogue to find a solution to this matter' (*Malaysiakini* 2011).

Among the many things that this case suggests is that external circumstances can result in a shift from an initial reluctance to openly challenge received norms towards more overt and publically declarative statements and actions in favour of change. While Seksualiti Merdeka had always sought to bring about change in Malaysian attitudes towards sexuality rights, it had favoured artistically-framed expression over direct confrontation. Not only did hostile media portrayals and unwanted attention from the authorities force it to adopt a more overt approach, it also forced other social movement organizations to declare their stripes on Seksualiti Merdeka's right to exist.

Notes

1 State is used in two ways in this article: to refer to a country's governmental infrastructure, including the police, judiciary, the legislature and in the case of Malaysia, state-sanctioned religious officials; and to sub-national territories such as the state (*negri*) of Selangor, the state of Terengganu, and the Federal Territory (*Wilayah*) of Kuala Lumpur.

2 By using 'non-normative sexuality', I intend to refer to non-heterosexual sexuality as well as extra- or pre-marital (hetero)sexuality.

3 Malaysia has been described as, among other things, semi-democratic or quasi-democratic (e.g. Case 2007) or an electoral one-party state (Wong and Norani 2009) in recognition of its formal democratic mechanisms and its Draconian state practices. Many who might be described as Islamists (see Lee 2010a: 18) and Malay ethno-religious nationalists regard Malaysia as fundamentally framed by Islam. The precedence of Islam above other religions and secularism is justified on a number of grounds, including Article 3 of the Constitution, which states that 'Islam is the religion of the Federation'. However, Malaysians – both Muslim and non-Muslim – disagree with this view and regard Malaysia as a secular state.

4 In India, where this section was read down by the High Court in 2008, the Ministry of Home Affairs had sought to defend the section by stating that 'When Section 377 was brought under the statute as an act of criminality, it responded to the values and mores of the time in Indian society' (in Human Rights Watch 2008). This is despite the fact that India has historically been a site where a relatively more open and accepting attitude towards sex and sexual diversity has prevailed (e.g. Lal 1999; Lee 2011a: 71).

5 The Act states that 'Any male person who, in any public place, wears a woman's attire and poses as a woman for immoral purposes shall be guilty of an offence'. Note that as Syariah law is administered by territories and states, rather than federally, there are differences in the law from state to state. For example, not all states criminalize 'sexual relations between females' (*musahaqah*) (as defined in the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997).

6 As Syariah law is administered at the state level and the National Fatwa Council is a federal-level body, the fatwas that it delivers do not carry the weight of law. Instead,

they are designed to be re-issued by muftis at the state level, where they do carry the weight of law, but only in that mufti's state. Fatwas also carry moral weight and are frequently reported in the media.

7 NGOs that are part of the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality are the All Women's Action Society, Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor, Perak Women for Women, Sabah Women's Action-Resource group, Sisters in Islam, Women's Aid Organisation and the Women's Centre for Change (see http://www.fiestafeminista.org/about/).

8 While a small number of individuals and organizations are consistently involved in Seksualiti Merdeka, there are no members as such. The organizing committee each year is unofficial and de facto, although revolving usually around Seksualiti Merdeka's founders. It is important to note, also, that participants are not confined to any particular ethnic or religious group.

9 This workshop was co-organized by the author.

10 See www.courageunfolds.crowdmap.com.

11 See http://www.seksualitimerdeka.org/2011/05/29-ways-towards-lgbtiq-friendly.html. In addition to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, LGBTIQ refers to intersexed persons and those who prefer the label queer (see Lee 2011a: 17–21). Among some of those in Seksualiti Merdeka, as well as in academia, the use of labels and acronyms is recognized as problematic for the diversities they gloss over. However, they serve a purpose in the absence of alternatives (see also Corrêa, Petchesky and Parker 2008: 8).

12 It is worth pointing out also that the activists involved were careful to work with journalists with whom they were familiar to ensure that articles that appeared would be sympathetic (e.g. Ong 2010).

13 See http://www.itgetsbetter.org/.

14 The Malaysian Islamic Development Department later stated that it was not within its power to take such action (see Fridae 2010).

15 Before this time, there had been no upsets at any of the festivals, with the exception of one relatively minor occurrence. In 2008, a stack of photocopied articles which had been made available for the public was at some point removed by an unknown person. The photocopied article was from *The Jakarta Post* and reported that a meeting of moderate scholars concluded that homosexuality is permissible in Islam (see Abdul 2008).

16 Articles cited various individuals and representatives of organizations as condemning Seksualiti Merdeka and homosexuality, often from an Islamic perspective (e.g. *Utusan Malaysia* 2011).

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12 The Christian Right and the Singaporean feminist movement

Lenore Lyons

The vexed relationship between feminism and right-wing movements has been a source of ongoing debate and discussion since the beginning of the second-wave women's movement (Pateman and Gross 1986). Feminists have had great difficulty understanding women's involvement in fundamental religious movements that are characterized by strong patriarchal authority structures and by ideologies that accord women subordinate roles (Bacchetta and Power 2002; Schreiber 2008). Fundamentalism is regarded as the antithesis of feminist politics and as part of an antifeminist backlash intended to restore men to the position of benign patriarchs within the family. Feminist theory therefore struggles to understand women who consciously constitute themselves through travel between both religious and feminist domains. Although some feminist and right-wing women occupy common ground on issues such as pornography, human trafficking and motherhood, they approach these issues from completely different realms of politics. While feminists engage in framing strategies centred in the arena of identity politics, right-wing women generally frame their concerns in the context of morality politics. The result is that both groups appear to be speaking past each other rather than engaging in political dialogue that might lead to mutual understanding or compromise.

This chapter examines the enduring divisions between feminists and right-wing women by exploring the ways in which liberal feminists and women from the Christian Right frame their claims to best represent 'women's rights' in Singapore.[1] It focuses on a highly public tussle between conservative and liberal feminists over the leadership of Singapore's most prominent feminist organization, the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE).[2] Since the mid-1980s, the Singaporean feminist movement has been based around a small number of NGOs, of which AWARE is the most prominent. In 2009, AWARE's role as the public face of liberal feminism was challenged when a group of conservative Christian, middle-class professionals were elected to the association's Executive Committee (Exco). The election of these women to AWARE's governing body created a furore amongst members of the so-called 'old guard' of founding and long-term AWARE members who had hitherto dominated the Exco and its sub-committees. The old guard mobilized a 'no confidence' campaign against the new Exco and called for their resignation at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).

The divisions between the newcomers and the old guard were primarily about the meanings attached to women's rights and feminist activism. However, these issues received surprisingly little attention in the war of words that surrounded the incident. The newcomers declared that as Christian women they were dismayed to discover that AWARE had 'lost sight of its original purpose and had become pro-lesbian and pro-homosexual' (*The Straits Times* 2009c). The old guard countered that they had a long track record of advocating for the rights of Singaporean women and that, contrary to the new Exco's allegations, they had never had a 'gay agenda' (Lam 2009). A detailed examination of the framing strategies and mobilizing tactics employed by both sides reveals the difficulties that each group had in articulating their vision of women's rights. The new Exco framed their position in terms of a moral politics intended to tap into social fears about the spread of 'homosexualism'. In contrast, the old guard highlighted the threats posed to the entire social fabric when a secular organization is hijacked by 'religious fundamentalism'. Preoccupied with the issues of homosexuality and religion, in the end, neither side was able to engage in a sustained discussion of their vision for gender equality in Singapore.

The chapter begins with an overview of the circumstances that led to the AWARE 'coup' and provides a detailed account of the claims, counter-claims and mobilizing tactics employed by both sides in the lead-up to the EGM. It then explores the two central frames employed in the ensuing debate: homosexualism as a threat to the family as the building block of the entire social fabric; and fundamentalism as a threat to multiculturalism as the foundation of nation-building. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the significance of the coup for political and social activism amongst Singapore's middle classes. In the scholarly literature on Singapore's civil society, this group is typically described as risk averse and compromised by their acceptance of a state-driven development agenda which requires them to relinquish political rights for economic prosperity. While undoubtedly constrained by the political climate in Singapore, the AWARE coup revealed a very different side to middle-class activism.

The coup

Preparations for the 24th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Singapore's Association of Women for Action and Research, to be held on the 28 March 2009, proceeded as planned. The AGM rarely attracted a crowd and the outgoing leadership was not expecting the election of the new Exco to be hotly contested. As in many NGOs with a small active membership base, the Exco had a tradition of tapping people on the shoulder for key committee roles.

At first, the larger than normal crowd of mostly new faces at the AGM was not a source of concern. It was interpreted as a welcome sign that the broader AWARE membership was keen to get involved in the organization. Warning bells began to sound, however, when nominations for the Exco positions were received from a host of new members. Their suspicions aroused, longstanding members suggested to the nominees that they might like to participate in one or more of AWARE's

numerous sub-committees in order to develop their knowledge and experience of the organization before taking on an Exco role. When this suggestion was rejected, they tried a new tack and asked the nominees to declare their positions on feminism, gender equity, religion and homosexuality. Some responded briefly, others refused to comment. At the end of the night, nine relatively new members had been elected to the twelve-person Exco. Longstanding members were shell-shocked at the ease with which the coup had been achieved. Their worst fear – that AWARE had been 'taken over' by a group of Christian conservatives – had been realized.

The public only knew of the events playing out in AWARE when the local media broke the story on 10 April (Wong, K. 2009b). The next day, the newly elected AWARE President, Claire Nazar, resigned from her position, citing irreconcilable differences between herself and the new Exco (Goh 2009). Ironically, it was Nazar, a relatively new AWARE member whose nomination for the position of President was supported by the outgoing Exco, who had nominated six of the new Exco members. Drawing on a network of acquaintances, Nazar had encouraged these women out of a desire to introduce 'fresh blood' to the organization (Goh 2009). She quickly found, however, that they did not share her views so she resigned in order to avoid their 'Stormtrooper tactics' (Goh 2009).

Meanwhile, AWARE's so-called 'old guard' met to decide what to do next. Led by outgoing President, Constance Singam, they gathered 160 signatures from members calling for an Extraordinary General Meeting to consider a motion of 'no confidence' in the new Exco on the grounds that it:

> (a) did not act and was not acting in the best interest of AWARE;
> (b) did not appreciate or share the values of AWARE; and
> (c) did not have the requisite experience to carry out AWARE's work or was otherwise inadequate to further AWARE's objectives.
>
> (AWARE 2010: 16–17)

By this time there was enormous media interest in the 'new guard' and their motivations for taking over AWARE. It took until the 16 April, however, for the new Exco to release a Press Statement announcing the appointment of a new President (Josie Lau) and outlining its goals and vision.

The intense interest in the values and policy agenda of the newly-installed Exco was fuelled by revelations, made soon after the committee was elected, that six of the nine new members attended the same church – the Church of Our Saviour (COOS), known for its conservative theological position on social issues – and held anti-gay and anti-abortion views (Tan and Ee 2009). The new Exco's religious values came under further scrutiny when it was revealed that former staff member of the National University of Singapore's Law Faculty, Dr Thio Su Mien, had styled herself as the women's 'Feminist Mentor' and encouraged them to join AWARE because she believed that the association was actively promoting homosexuality. Thio claimed that AWARE's sex education workshops (run under the Ministry of Education's Comprehensive Sex Education Programme) encouraged young people to see homosexuality in 'neutral' terms instead of

'negatively', warning 'this is something which should concern parents in Singapore. Are we going to have an entire generation of lesbians?' (cited in Hussain 2009).

The exact nature of the link between Thio and each of the new Exco members remains unclear, with all parties claiming that they were barely acquainted and had not orchestrated a coup. While some commentators have speculated that this claim is disingenuous, the women have demonstrated an extraordinary reluctance to speak to both the media and researchers, and little is known about their strategies or motivations beyond what has been published in the mainstream press. One journalist for the national English daily, *The Straits Times*, reported that:

> If there was a point of contact, it seemed to be Dr Thio Su Mien, whom they referred to as their 'mentor'. Though Dr Thio said she had played a part in persuading the four to take up positions in Aware, the women said they were 'not puppets' of Dr Thio. They had joined Aware because, like her, they had been concerned that the group had a hidden agenda to promote lesbianism and homosexuality as being acceptable.
>
> (Davie 2009)

If we accept the women's claim that they did not actively work together to 'take over' AWARE, then it is likely that the ease with which they achieved their goal surprised them as much as it did the old guard. But whatever their motivations in standing for election, it was the new Exco's Christian background that attracted intense media interest.

Public debate focused on two issues: the new Exco's religious values and the 'pro-lesbian' stance of the old guard. As the drama played out in the daily papers and blogosphere, the AWARE saga began to take on the appearance of a television soap opera. Every day there was yet another sensationalist element to the story. Over the next two weeks, the public learned that the manager of the AWARE Centre had been dismissed for 'insubordination'; the locks at the Centre had been changed and police called in to manage an altercation between male supporters of the new Exco and members of the old guard; Josie Lau and her family received death threats; an envelope containing a suspicious 'white powder' was sent to the AWARE office; an Exco member's business was the target of a boycott campaign; Josie Lau's employer publicly chastised her for her decision to take on the Presidency and announced that her actions would be the subject of an internal investigation; former AWARE President, Braema Mathi, was sacked as chair of the sub-committee responsible for coordinating the production of AWARE's shadow Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) report; outgoing President, Constance Singam, resigned as advisor to the Exco; and by the end of the month, the two other longstanding members of AWARE on the Exco had also resigned.

As the debate raged on in the print media and in cyberspace, a Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Lim Hwee Hua, urged all involved not to 'allow these disagreements to become a vehicle for views on contentious, divisive issues to be

pushed aggressively. This would polarise our society and have a very adverse effect on our social fabric' (cited in Chan and Ee 2009). The government's concerns were widely shared by a public that had grown accustomed to seeing religion as a private matter and not something to be openly debated or discussed in the public sphere. In the countdown to the EGM, scheduled for 2 May, both sides in the drama found themselves the subject of public criticism. The battle was framed by some as a 'cat-fight' within the women's movement and was cited as further evidence that elite women were out of touch with issues affecting women at the grassroots. The new Exco were widely criticized for bringing religion into a secular public sphere, while the old guard were lambasted for their treatment of homosexuality as a 'neutral' moral issue.

As the date of the EGM neared, AWARE's membership swelled from 700 to over 3,000. Both sides in the drama actively recruited new members using social media and the Internet. Some women joined on the strength of the news coverage because they supported the position of one side or the other. The majority of these new members had never before been involved in an NGO or civil society organization. As it became clear that there would be thousands of attendees at the EGM, plans were made to hire a large enough venue to accommodate them. Initially the Singapore Expo at Changi was booked, but when it became known that a large Christian conference was going to be held at the same venue that day, the police intervened fearing that it might lead to a public disturbance and the venue was changed to Suntec City Convention Centre (Wong and Tan 2009).

On the eve of the EGM it was widely reported that Pastor Derek Hong from COOS, the church attended by six of the new Exco members and their mentor, Thio, had urged his congregation to support the women's fight against the no confidence motion. The reports claimed that during a sermon he had urged the women in his flock to 'be engaged' and support Ms Lau and 'her sisters' at AWARE. He was quoted as saying: 'It's not a crusade against the people but there's a line that God has drawn for us, and we don't want our nation crossing that line' (cited in Suhaimi 2009). The line to which he referred was that separating moral behaviour (heterosexuality) from immoral behaviour (homosexuality). The President of the National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS), Dr John Chew, responded to this report by stating that 'We do not condone churches getting involved in this matter; neither do we condone pulpits being used for this purpose' (cited in Hussain and Wong 2009). In response to NCCS and government pressure, the pastor retracted his comments and affirmed that religious tolerance was a cornerstone of Singapore's multi-religious, multi-cultural society.

On the day of the EGM, crowds began to arrive early at the Suntec City Convention Centre. The battle lines between the two sides were clearly drawn. Supporters of the new Exco wore red T-shirts with the slogan 'Pro-women, Pro-family, Pro-Singapore'; while those of the old guard wore white T-shirts with the slogan 'We Are Aware'. Both sides were represented by legal counsel. The old guard and its supporters had been preparing for days – they had formed small committees responsible for managing different aspects of the meeting. The EGM

lasted over eight hours and was characterized by passionate and often spontaneous speeches, as well as raucous and sometimes disrespectful behaviour. To a public unaccustomed to displays of mass protest or civil disobedience, the women attending the EGM behaved inappropriately for a Singaporean NGO – they were noisy, they jeered, they shouted, and they demanded to be heard. The no confidence motion was eventually put and supported by two-thirds of the 2,000 plus members in attendance.[3] Although not required under the Constitution, the crowd demanded that the Exco resign. Josie Lau and her fellow committee members left the room to deliberate, and when after half an hour they did not return, those present elected a new committee to lead AWARE. Unexpectedly, the old guard had triumphed.

AWARE's 'pro-lesbian' stance

Throughout the AWARE saga, the new Exco framed their actions in terms of their fear that Singapore was under threat of a 'homosexualism' agenda. The allegation that AWARE's old guard was 'pro-lesbian' rested on evidence amassed by the new Exco's feminist mentor, Dr Thio. She cited the following examples as evidence of the association's 'pro-gay' stance: a film featuring lesbian lovers was shown at an AWARE fund-raising event; a Mother's Day event AWARE had organized for mothers and their lesbian daughters; the fact that the Exco allowed a vote on whether or not to allow men to join AWARE as full members;[4] that 'a famous homosexual activist', Alex Au was invited to participate in an AWARE forum on HIV/AIDS; and that homosexuality was dealt with as a 'neutral' issue in AWARE's sex education training manual (*The Straits Times* 2009b). The new Exco drew on these examples to argue that AWARE had become 'preoccupied' with homosexuality (Basu 2009). Newly installed President, Josie Lau, argued that AWARE:

> . . . has now become a single-objective organisation. So that's what the new team is here to do: we want to bring Aware back to its original, very noble objective, which is to represent all women, to advance their cause, all women whatever religion and race in areas such as professional development, their private life, their health . . . We need to look at ageism, all the problems . . . So we should be pushing those causes.
>
> (cited in Davie 2009)

On her part, feminist mentor Thio claimed that the actions of the new Exco leaders were motivated by a fear that Singapore was under threat from a 'political homosexual movement which seeks to infiltrate into Singapore' from the US and Europe. She argued that this lobby group, which took the form of 'a kind of neo-colonialism' was campaigning to decriminalize gay sex and establish same-sex marriages in Singapore (cited in Low et al. 2009).[5]

The claim that AWARE had lost its way and was preoccupied with advancing a lesbian agenda was refuted by the old guard, who cited their numerous

achievements and ongoing activities to advance women's rights in Singapore. Since its establishment in 1985, AWARE has advocated for equal employment opportunities for women, access to equal educational opportunities for girls and changes to laws on domestic violence.[6] The old guard found, however, that they achieved little traction in pressing forward with this message. Fuelled by the new Exco's controversial statements, the media and public were overwhelmingly focused on the content of AWARE's Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programme. It was this issue, more than any other, that generated negative public attitudes towards AWARE's old guard.

AWARE was one of a number of NGOs and social service organizations contracted by the Ministry of Education to teach sex education in schools. The programme began in 2007 and over the next two years it had been taught in 12 secondary schools to approximately 500 students, mostly girls. The programme consisted of 2 three-hour sessions in which sexuality was dealt with from a health perspective using a combination of games and role-play scenarios in which young people were educated on the consequences of pre-marital and unprotected sex. The issue of homosexuality was dealt with in a segment of the programme which lasted less than five minutes. The content of the programme was revealed to the public after the new Exco distributed the instructor's manual to the media. Among the statements they highlighted as examples of AWARE's 'neutral' stance on homosexuality were that anal sex 'can be healthy or neutral if practised with consent and with a condom' (cited in *The Sunday Times* 2009) and that 'Homosexuality is perfectly normal. Just like heterosexuality, it is simply the way you are. Homosexuals also form meaningful relationships, and face the same emotional issues that heterosexuals do' (cited in Davie and Tan 2009). The new Exco claimed that these statements contained 'moral judgments which not everybody agrees with' (*The Sunday Times* 2009). They argued that although they believed that lesbians and homosexuals 'should be treated with dignity and respect', it was not AWARE's role to 'champion the homosexualism agenda' (*The Sunday Times* 2009).

The AWARE CSE Development Team responded to these criticisms with letters to the press and by posting details of the programme on an alternative *We are AWARE* website established to garner support for the old guard.[7] Those involved in the CSE defended their position on homosexuality by claiming that their aim was to 'dispel myths with accurate information, and to protect young women from the risk of violence, discrimination, depression and self-destructive behaviors' (Yang 2009). Recognizing that Singapore is a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, the aim of the programme was to inform young people in a non-judgemental manner and encourage them to discuss the issue with their parents and religious leaders:

> We have therefore chosen to list homosexuality as a neutral issue in an exercise which helps young women understand all the different aspects of their sexuality. The objective of this exercise is to help young women understand that their views are determined by culture, law, mass media, religion, peers

> and education, amongst others. At no point does the programme try to challenge existing values; it only helps people understand themselves better and be more aware when they take decisions. The ability to rationalize and think through their decisions is one that most parents would want their children to have.
>
> (Yang 2009)

The arguments posed by both sides were strategically framed in terms of Singapore's legal system, which prohibits male homosexuality. Singapore's Penal Code contains two clauses on homosexual acts. The first (Section 377A) deals with 'gross indecency' and specifically relates to sexual acts between male persons. Most homosexual 'crimes', however, have been pursued as 'outrage of modesty' or with 'molesting' another person (Section 354), usually following 'sting operations' using undercover policeman (Leong 1997). The law has not been tested in a case involving two women, and it is unclear how the courts would interpret the law in such instances.[8] In 2007, as part of a wider review of the Penal Code, the government signalled that it would amend those parts of Section 377 (Unnatural Offences) that criminalized oral and anal sex between consenting heterosexual adults. A nominated Member of Parliament used this opportunity to petition Parliament to repeal Section 377A (the section dealing with sex acts between male persons) as well. The issue was vigorously debated and ultimately the government decided to leave the law as it was. In explaining the government's decision, Senior Minister of State Ho Peng Kee said:

> Singaporeans are still a largely conservative society. The majority find homosexual behaviour offensive and unacceptable. Neither side is going to persuade or convince the other of their position. We should live and let live, and let the situation evolve, in tandem with the values of our society. This approach is a pragmatic one that maintains Singapore's social cohesion . . . Whilst homosexuals have a place in society and, in recent years, more social space, repealing section 377A will be very contentious and may send a wrong signal that Government is encouraging and endorsing the homosexual lifestyle as part of our mainstream way of life.
>
> (Ministry of Home Affairs 2007)

While rejecting a repeal of Section 377A, the government affirmed its current approach not to be 'proactive' in enforcing the act in relation to consensual sex done 'in private'. The government thus implied that gays and lesbians were free to do what they like, as long as traditional social and moral values were not infringed in public.

These events were fresh in the minds of the public as they contemplated the events at AWARE in March–April 2009. Despite the old guard's best efforts to explain their stance on sex education, their failure to discuss homosexuality in negative terms was an issue of considerable public concern. It was this issue alone which appeared to garner the new Exco significant levels of support and which

prompted many individuals to sign up as new members in the lead-up to the EGM. In presenting their case to the public, the new Exco were careful not to present their argument as 'anti-gay' but rather 'anti-homosexualism', which they defined as a foreign political movement which threatened to undermine the sanctity of the family. Through their slogan – 'Pro-Women, Pro-Family, Pro-Singapore' – they reframed feminism and women's interests in their own image and chastised their liberal counterparts for misleading women into believing that gay rights was a feminist issue.

The incident prompted a review of the CSE. In the immediate days following Thio's allegations about AWARE's sex education programme, the Ministry of Education defended AWARE's activities and stated that it had received no formal complaints (Sum 2009). In May 2009, however, the Ministry suspended AWARE's involvement, claiming that some of the content in its instructor's manual was 'too explicit and inappropriate, and convey messages which could promote homosexuality or suggest approval of pre-marital sex' (cited in Othman 2009). The Christian Right did not retain their hold on AWARE's leadership, but their goal of removing AWARE's 'pro-gay' sex education programme had succeeded.

Maintaining religious harmony

AWARE's role as an advocate of women's sexual rights was irreparably damaged by the controversy surrounding its stance on homosexuality. The new Exco's campaign to promote a morally conservative stance on sexuality tapped into and reinforced existing social attitudes towards homosexuality and youth sex – views shared by members of the wider Christian community, as well as individuals from a range of other religious faiths. Unable to counter the patriarchal Christian church's views on sexuality and the sanctity of the family, the old guard mobilized another key foundation of nation building in Singapore: multiculturalism. They argued that the old guard's commitment to secularism set it apart from the new Exco, which was seen to represent the views of only one group, namely Chinese Christians. In comparison, the old guard represented a broad spectrum of women from all ethnic groups and religions. Their supporters argued that in multi-ethnic, multi-religious Singapore this was not only a more representative model for a secular civil society organization, it was also in line with the state's own vision of multiculturalism. The latter claim brought to the fore the fraught issue of the role that religion plays in the sphere of civil society.

The Singapore state relies for its legitimacy on the imagery of the ever-present danger of inter-ethnic conflict. Consequently, while ethnicity occupies a central place in the formation of the nation:

> [T]he concept of national interest simultaneously denies these differences as a rational basis for legitimate political organisation and prevents them from being politically thematised in the public domain by casting them as potentially against the national interests themselves.
>
> (Chua 1995: 107–8)

Within this model, religion is seen as an important repository of traditional values and thus a central building block of nation-building (Lai 1995). At the same time, it is presented as a potential site of conflict which needs to be carefully managed. This stance is enshrined in law through the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act which prohibits the use of the pulpit for politics. It does not, however, preclude religious organizations from taking an active role in civil society, and in fact, many religious groups play a central role in the provision of social services for the aged or disabled.

The government's view is that although individuals have the right to express their views according to their religious teachings, in a multi-religious society they must do so while being mindful of the sensitivities of other groups. In the case of the AWARE coup, it was concerned by what it saw as the encroachment of religion into the 'political' sphere. According to Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Wong:

> If religious groups start to campaign to change certain government policies, or use the pulpit to mobilise their followers to pressure the Government, or push aggressively to gain ground at the expense of other groups, this must lead to trouble. Keeping religion and politics separate is a key rule of political engagement.
>
> (*The Straits Times* 2009a)

The government's curious reference to the space occupied by AWARE as a 'political arena' requires closer scrutiny. AWARE and other civil society organizations (CSOs) work within a framework commonly dubbed the 'out-of-bounds markers' (OB markers). The government expects CSOs to support state-defined national values and to accept that some subjects are always 'off limits'. Ho (2000: 186) describes these as 'issues that are too sensitive to be discussed in public for fear of destabilising or jeopardising public peace and order'. The elite of the ruling People's Action Party is responsible for determining the limits of the OB markers, a task that it largely performs retrospectively with the result that what actually constitutes 'unacceptable political engagement' is often unclear so most NGOs adopt a cautious approach in their activities (Lyons 2000; Lyons and Gomez 2005). The state also limits the parameters of civil society through legislation. While the Singapore Constitution guarantees freedom of association (Article 14) in principle, organizations with more than ten members or committees with more than five members are required to register under the Societies Act or the Companies Act. Groups whose activities are related to religious, ethnic, civil and political rights, or to the governance of Singapore, are carefully screened on the grounds that they may give rise to 'law and order' problems or carry out activities prejudicial to the national interest. All registered organizations are expressly prohibited from engaging in 'political activity'.

It would appear that, in this instance, the actions of the new Christian Exco had the potential to overstep the OB markers and move AWARE into the political sphere by virtue of their publicly anti-gay stance. The government warned against

importation of US-style 'cultural wars' between extreme liberals and conservatives, cautioning that it would 'not stand by and watch when intemperate activism threatens our social fabric (DPM Wong cited in Au and Hussain 2009). It was the spectre of religious conflict arising from the AWARE saga that attracted the government's interest.

The state's initially restrained response to the AWARE coup had surprised many observers. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) has a reputation for tightly managing the activities of NGOs but on this occasion it stated that the election of AWARE's Exco was an 'internal matter' to be settled by the organization's membership. It emphasized, however, that religion had no role in the secular realm of civil society, and applied pressure behind-the-scenes to ensure that religious leaders toed the line. Interviewed in the wake of the EGM, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng said:

> Who controls Aware is not important to the Government. As I said, government policy on homosexuality is settled and will not change as a result of lobbying by pressure groups. However, the Government was worried about the disquieting public perception that a group of conservative Christians, all attending the same church, which held strong views on homosexuality had moved in and taken over Aware because they disapproved of what Aware had been doing. This caused many qualms among non-Christians, and also among Christians who believed that this was an unwise move in a multiracial, multi-religious society. It was much more dangerous because now, religion was also getting involved, and it was no longer just the issue of homosexuality.
>
> (*The Straits Times* 2009a)

The association of the Christian Right with intolerance and therefore the possibility of social conflict was a view that AWARE's old guard promoted in the lead up to the EGM. They speculated that in taking over AWARE the new Exco intended to use a secular organization as a vehicle to advocate a religious viewpoint, thereby threatening the state's careful management of civil society.

In mobilizing AWARE's membership and other supporters, and in pro-actively using the media to promote their cause, the old guard re-asserted their commitment to the core ethic of 'inclusiveness'. This position is summed up in the following statement made in the lead-up to the EGM by Dr Kanwaljit Soin, a founding member and former AWARE President:

> AWARE's founding principle has been inclusiveness and because it has been inclusive we cannot condemn, deny or exclude any woman because of her sexual orientation or because she's been abused by her husband or because she's a single mother.
>
> (cited in Wong, K. 2009a)

In this statement, Soin argues that the racial and religious inclusiveness of AWARE must be extended to incorporate all other forms of difference, including

but not limited to sexuality. In conservative Singapore, however, making the leap from multiculturalism to sexual inclusiveness was a difficult exercise. The new Exco's constant reference to AWARE's 'homosexualism agenda' forced the old guard to continuously justify their position to an unsympathetic public. These sensitivities are demonstrated in the following statement by Dana Lam who was elected AWARE's new President at the conclusion of the EGM. As the saga ended, Lam acted to reassure the public that AWARE was not a pro-lesbian organization:

> We would like to point out that homosexuality has never been 'a major issue' for the Association of Women for Action and Research (Aware). Our stand, throughout the 24 years of our existence, has been identical to that of the Government. We agree that the heterosexual family is the norm for our society. But homosexuals are also part of our society and they should be able to live freely and happily, free of any discrimination. It must be made clear: Aware has never promoted homosexuality . . . The allegation of a 'gay agenda' was made by Dr Thio Su Mien, and the team of women she hand-picked to join Aware and take over its leadership, on the strengths of bits of information taken out of context and strung together to create an imaginary and inaccurate picture of Aware's activities.
>
> (Lam 2009)

As this statement demonstrates, it is difficult to explain what it means to be an organization that is open to diverse forms of sexual expression in a social context where the discussion of non-normative sexuality is constrained. It was an argument that the old guard were never going to win. Realizing this, they succeeded in sidestepping the issue of sexuality by tapping into the state's own strategy of using the ever-present danger of racial conflict as a basis for managing civil society.

Conclusion

This case study reveals the difficulties in articulating a progressive gender politics in a context where conservative morality overshadows all claims to sexual autonomy. Both sides sought to support their claims through framing strategies which rhetorically aligned women's rights with larger cultural beliefs and values about family, sexuality and religion. On the one hand, the new Exco members from the Christian Right argued that feminism in Singapore had gotten off track by fostering excessive individualism and personal choice (embodied in the politics of sexual identity) at the expense of a commitment to family. On the other hand, AWARE's old guard countered that Singapore's fragile multiculturalism was at risk of being shattered by a right-wing conservative Christian politics that threatened to impose its views on all Singaporeans. What is remarkable about the framing strategies employed by both sides is that they largely avoided engaging with the question of what constitutes 'women's rights' and the question of whether

gay rights are a women's rights issue. Instead, both sides tried to win advantage with the authorities and the public by framing their demands in ways intended to tap into social fears about 'homosexualism' (the new Exco) or 'religious extremism' (the old guard). The result was that neither side's framing strategy engaged with the other's.

The events of 2009 did more than just focus attention on the underlying tensions within Singapore society between conservative religious forces and liberal feminists. They shattered the myth that Singaporeans are apolitical or apathetic when it comes to political debate. Singapore's civil society has long been regarded as risk averse and lacking in the skills and techniques of mass mobilization. The EGM revealed a very different story. Thousands of women (and men) turned up to voice their concerns and cast their vote on the no confidence motion. The women who attended the EGM demonstrated extraordinary organizational skills honed not through the cut and thrust of NGO politics, but based on their experiences in Singapore's highly efficient corporate and public-sector work environments. While there has been speculation that the new Exco ultimately failed because it adopted a 'corporate', 'top-down', 'cheque book' style of leadership, compared to the organic volunteerism of the old guard (Chew and Long 2009; Ho 2009), neither side had any experience in mobilizing such a large group of diverse individuals. Many supporters of the old guard acted independently of its leadership. They set up websites, Facebook sites, online campaigns, blogs and a telephone hotline, and used SMS and Twitter to keep local and international supporters up-to-date with the latest news. In a short space of time the mobilization team had organized T-shirts, fact sheets and placards, and had prepared for the logistical challenges of a large (and uncharacteristically unruly) meeting. During the EGM updates were streamed live via the Internet, and those who could not attend were able to watch the events unfold on their computer screens and smart phones, or receive live Twitter updates from the floor.[9] Singapore had not witnessed such levels of mass participation outside of the political sphere for over fifty years.

The EGM epitomized the spirit and values that had underpinned AWARE's activism for 25 years – it was a celebration of women's diversity and women's activism. But, at the same time, it was also a space that many women found threatening and unfriendly. The failed coup attempt demonstrated that while AWARE may seek to be all things for all women, many conservative women do not see inclusiveness as a cornerstone of feminist practice. Although both sides claimed that they best embodied feminism's values and principles, ultimately only one side was going to win the public fight to lead AWARE. In the wake of the EGM, managing diversity has been made even more complex by the significant increase in AWARE's membership. While it is difficult to gauge the number of conservative women who joined AWARE in the lead-up to the EGM, there is no doubt that its members hold quite different views on a range of issues, not least of which is homosexuality. AWARE now faced the challenge of meeting the expectations of this diverse group, many of whom have no previous exposure or involvement in Singapore's women's movement or broader civil society.[10] AWARE has attempted to incorporate this

diversity using its previous strategy of internal inclusiveness. A key part of this strategy has been re-building lines of communication with members and offering a positive role model of Singaporean feminism. In order to better understand the conditions that gave rise to the coup, the incoming Exco has organized seminars on the status of the women's rights movement in Singapore and on Christian fundamentalism and its impact on women. Most of this work has been internally focused, and the question of what women's rights, feminism and gender equality mean in the Singaporean context remains unaddressed in the public domain.

The 2009 incident demonstrates the complex interplay between identity politics and morality politics in Singapore's growing middle classes, and the potential for both forces to shape not only civil society but also political activism in Singapore. The losses for AWARE are enormous – its public standing has been damaged, the cause of women's rights has been belittled, and its liberal sex education programme has been scuttled – but the wider ramifications of the AWARE saga are much more mixed. A younger generation of Singaporeans have been introduced to the possibilities of mass mobilization and have tested their organizing skills using traditional techniques and new social media. At the same time, however, the AWARE saga once again illustrated the enormity of the task ahead of this new generation of potential activists. The ruling PAP elite are notoriously unwilling to share political space and have used both administrative and coercive means to control the activities of NGOs and other civil society organizations. Its management of civil society has been successful because it relies on a combination of internalization of state-sponsored social and political values and organizational self-regulation in order to ensure compliance with state guidelines. At no time during the struggle for AWARE did either side seek to challenge the legitimacy of the patriarchal state. Instead, both sides actively and consciously mobilized nation-building discourses in their attempts to gain political ground in the public war of words about who best represented the interests of Singaporean women. Not only did this reinforce the state's legitimacy, it limited the opportunities for both groups to introduce a genuinely alternative political voice on women's rights.

Notes

1 Although the term 'Christian Right' has yet to form a strong part of political or social discourse in Singapore, I use it in line with its widespread usage elsewhere to refer to conservative, evangelical Christian groups.
2 This chapter draws on conversations with AWARE members who were present at the AGM and involved in the subsequent EGM. At the request of AWARE members, neither names nor pseudonyms have been used to identify individuals. I have been a member of AWARE for almost twenty years and have worked with a number of AWARE Executive Committees on a range of research and publication activities during this time. The views presented in this chapter are my own and not those of the Association. I would like to thank Emma Dalton for her assistance in collecting the online materials used in this research.
3 Many commentators have speculated that large numbers of supporters of the new Exco stayed away from the EGM following Dr Chew's statement and Pastor Heng's retraction.

4 Men are able to join AWARE as non-voting members. In 2008, the association voted on whether or not to include men as full voting members (the proposal was rejected), an event that Dr Thio described in the following terms: 'So there is this sudden shift to give men the vote. Why? Are the men masquerading? Is [sic] the homosexual activist men coming under the umbrella of Aware?' (*The Straits Times* 2009b).
5 Even after the EGM reinstated the old guard, Dr Thio continued to argue that AWARE's leadership were under the influence of a gay agenda. She claimed that 'activist homosexual groups were out in full force' at the EGM and that 'many sexually challenged women were among the most vocal and vociferous supporters of the old guard' (Thio 2009).
6 In addition to its policy and research work, AWARE has run workshops and seminars on a variety of topics and operates a volunteer helpline service for women who are the victims of domestic violence. For a detailed discussion of AWARE's activities and achievements see Lyons (2004) and Arora (2007).
7 The site (www.we-are-aware.sg) was one of several support websites established in the lead-up to the EGM. It was used to disseminate information about the EGM and recruit members.
8 Leong (1997) argues that the law is concerned only with male homosexual behaviour and ignores lesbians with the result that officially, lesbianism does not exist.
9 Demonstrating their entrepreneurial flair some supporters even designed T-shirts using phrases streamed via Twitter during the EGM (Wong, F. 2009). These included 'Sit Down and Shut Up!' (shouted out by Sally Ang, a member of the new Exco) and 'I'm on page 73' (a statement by Dr Thio). 'Shut up and sit down!' later crossed over into advertising campaigns for Subaru cars and the Botak Jones chain of food outlets (*The Straits Times* 2009d).
10 In the two years following the AWARE saga, neither the Christian Right nor other conservative women's groups attempted to harness the interests or energies of the new Exco's supporters. AWARE's old guard also had trouble reaching out to this group of women and AWARE's membership has inevitably dropped as these women fail to renew their membership.

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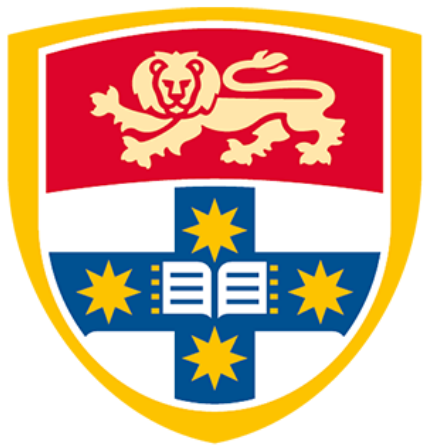

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